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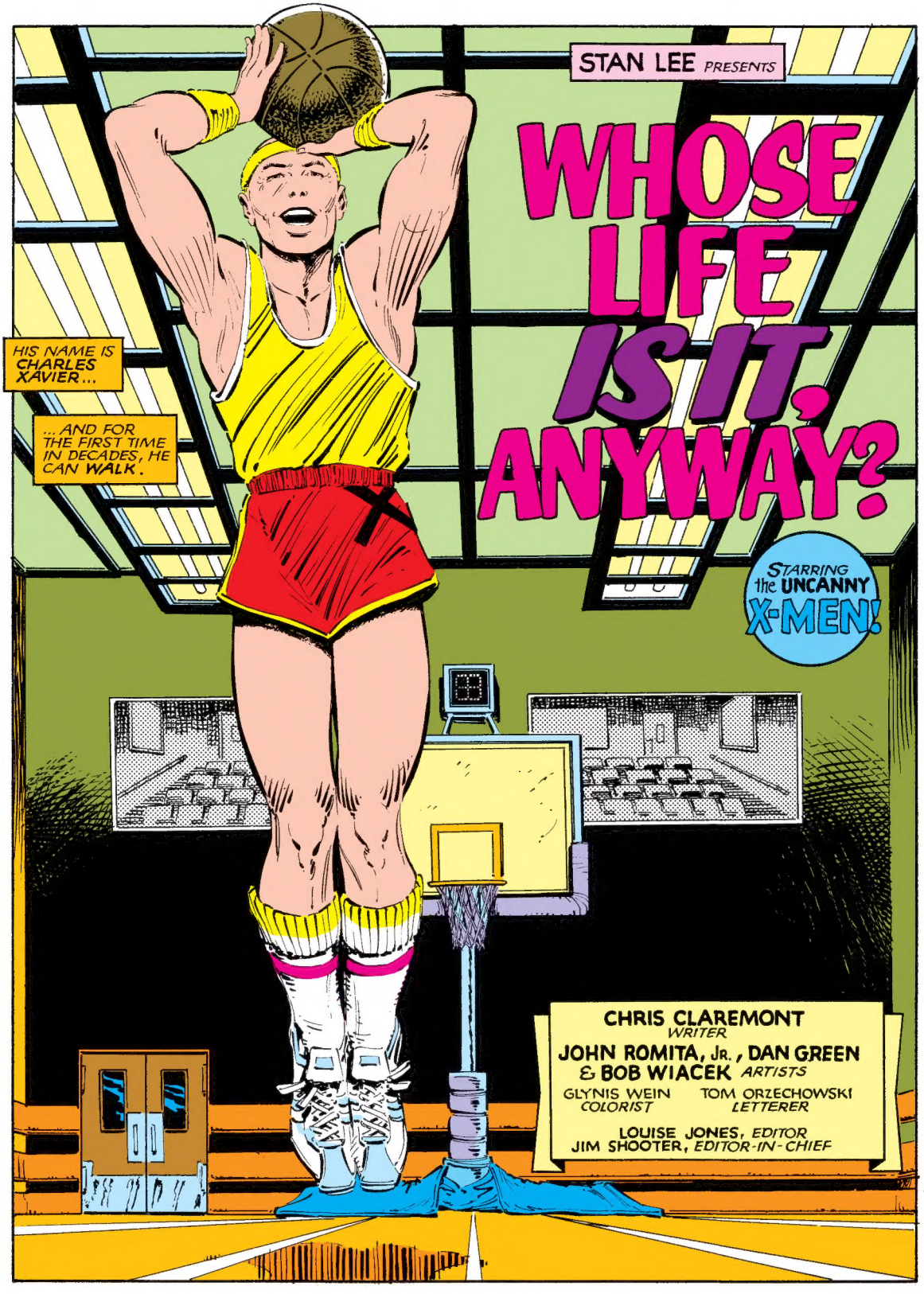

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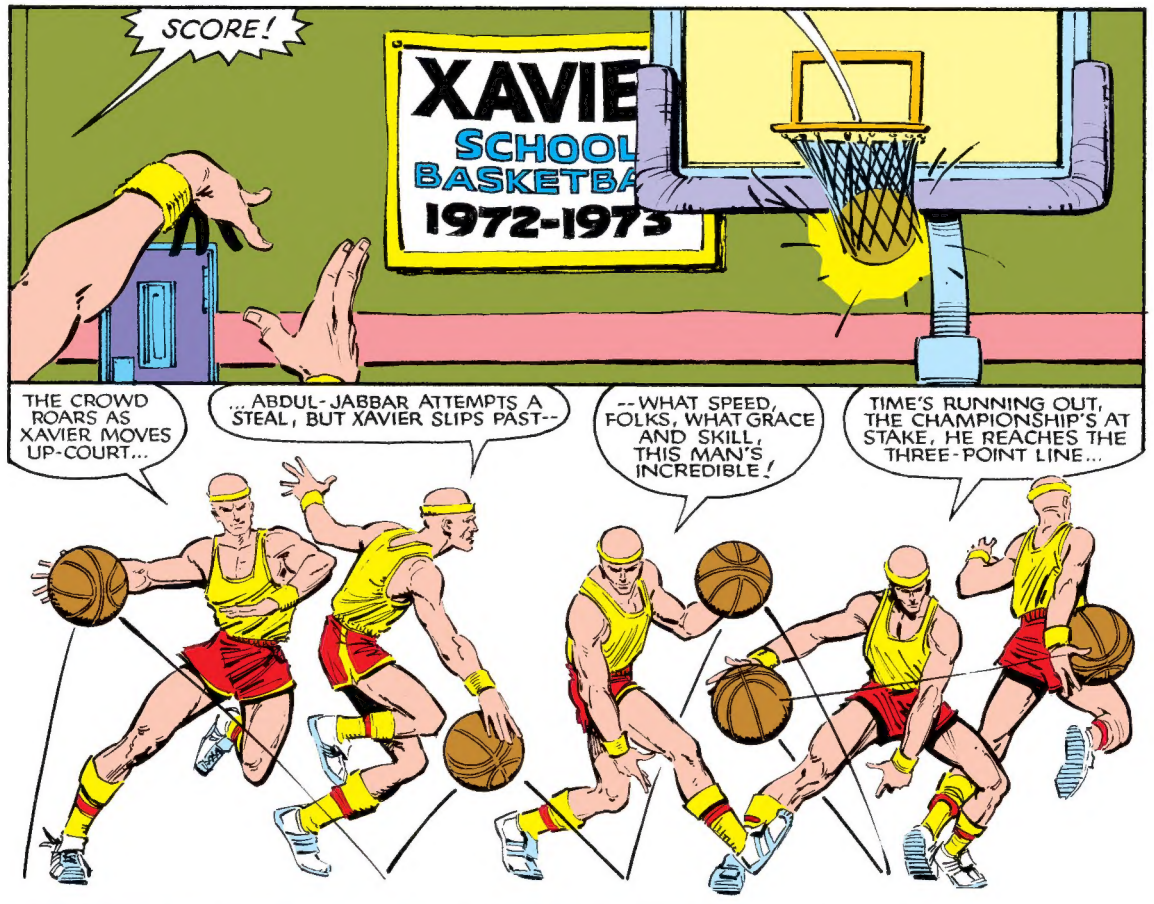
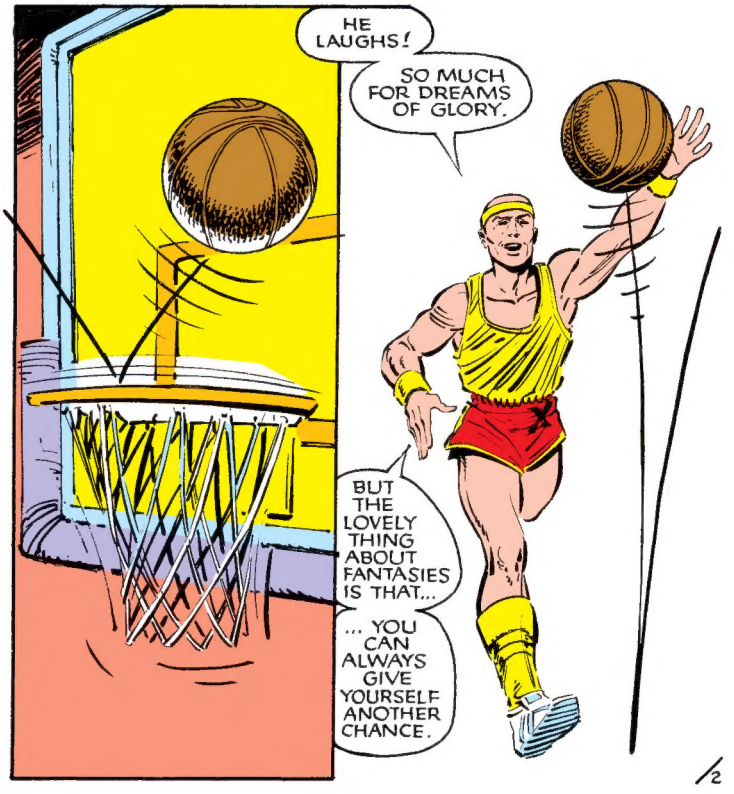
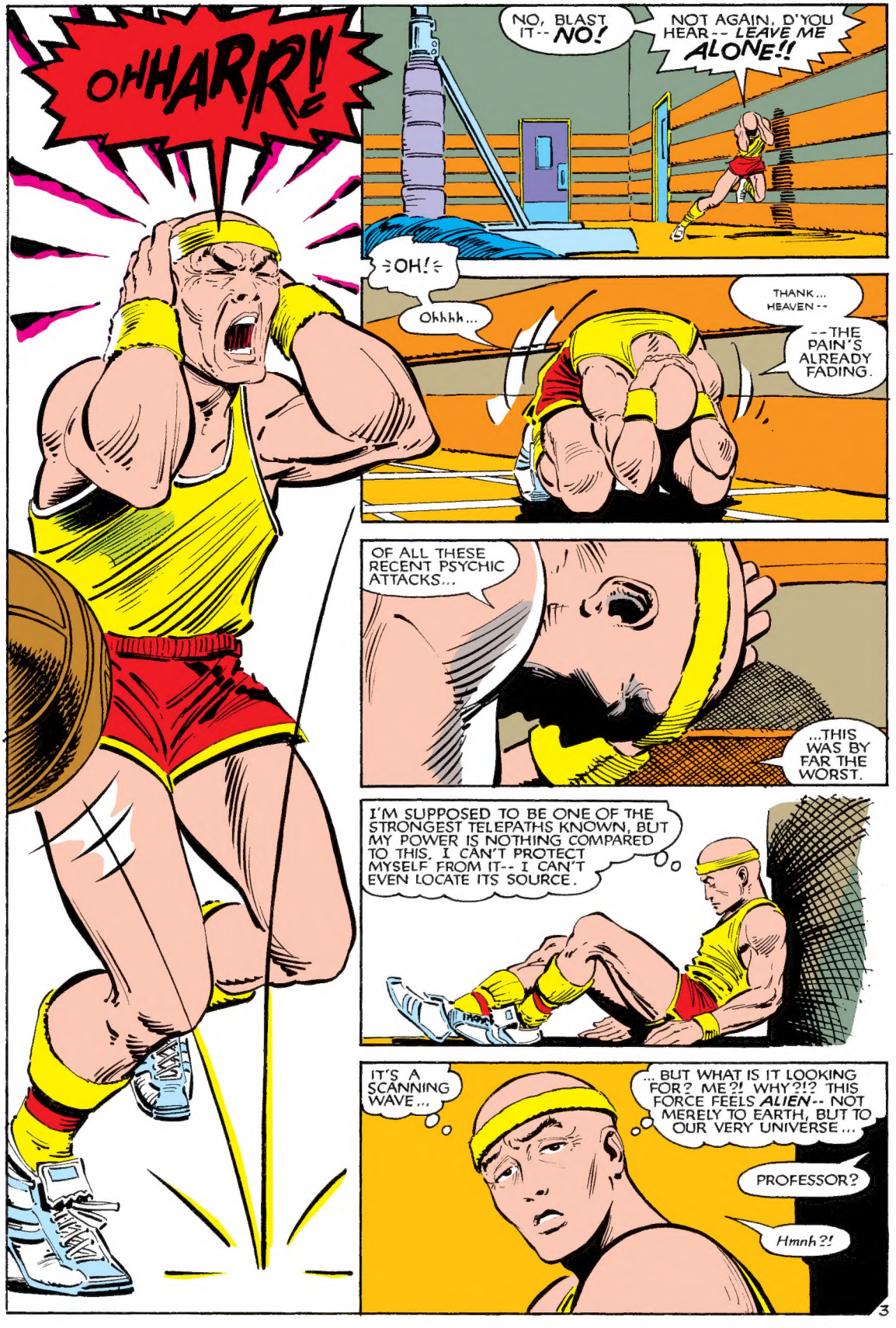
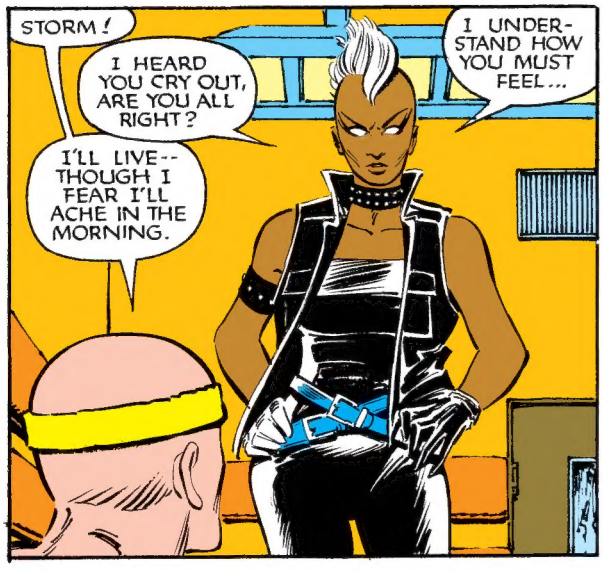
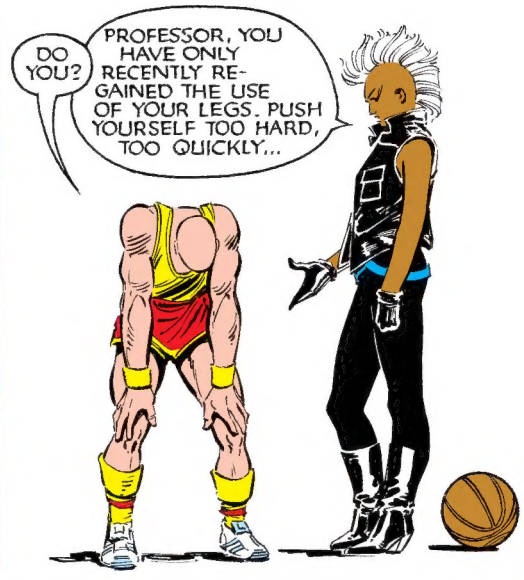

SCORE!
XAVIE
SCHOOL
BASKETBA
1972-1973
THE CROWD ROARS AS XAVIER MOVES UP-COURT...
... ABDUL-JABBAR ATTEMPTS A STEAL, BUT XAVIER SLIPS PAST--
--WHAT SPEED, FOLKS, WHAT GRACE AND SKILL, THIS MAN'S INCREDIBLE!
TIME'S RUNNING OUT, THE CHAMPIONSHIP'S AT STAKE, HE REACHES THE THREE-POINT LINE...

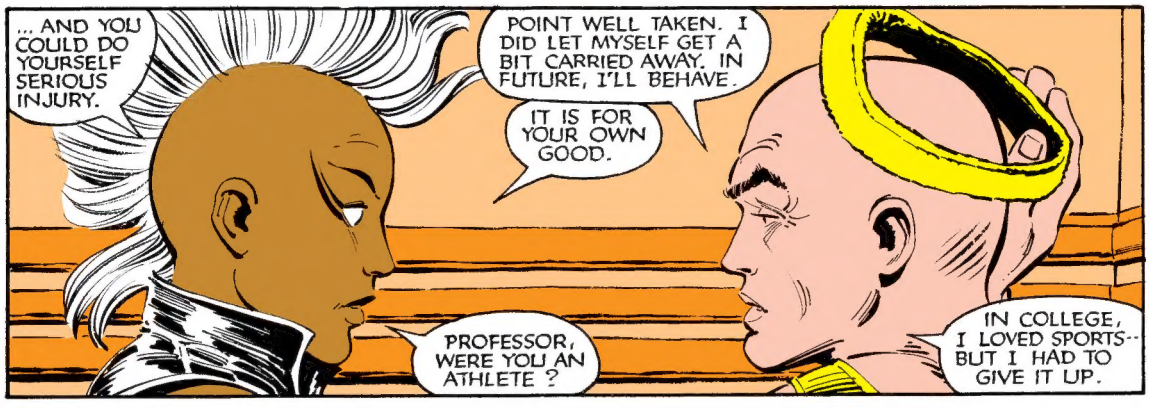
... HE SETS...
... HE SHOOTS!


HE LAUGHS!
SO MUCH FOR DREAMS OF GLORY.
BUT THE LOVELY THING ABOUT FANTASIES IS THAT...
... YOU CAN ALWAYS GIVE YOURSELF ANOTHER CHANCE.


OHHARR!!
NO, BLAST IT-- NO!
NOT AGAIN, D'YOU HEAR-- LEAVE ME ALONE!!
OH!
Ohhhh...
THANK... HEAVEN--
--THE PAIN'S ALREADY FADING.
OF ALL THESE RECENT PSYCHIC ATTACKS...
...THIS WAS BY FAR THE WORST.
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE ONE OF THE STRONGEST TELEPATHS KNOWN, BUT MY POWER IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THIS. I CAN'T PROTECT MYSELF FROM IT-- I CAN'T EVEN LOCATE ITS SOURCE.
IT'S A SCANNING WAVE...
... BUT WHAT IS IT LOOKING FOR? ME?! WHY?!? THIS FORCE FEELS ALIEN-- NOT MERELY TO EARTH, BUT TO OUR VERY UNIVERSE...
PROFESSOR?
Hmnh?!


STORM!
I HEARD YOU CRY OUT, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'LL LIVE-- THOUGH I FEAR I'LL ACHE IN THE MORNING.
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU MUST FEEL...


DO YOU?
PROFESSOR, YOU HAVE ONLY RECENTLY REGAINED THE USE OF YOUR LEGS. PUSH YOURSELF TOO HARD, TOO QUICKLY...

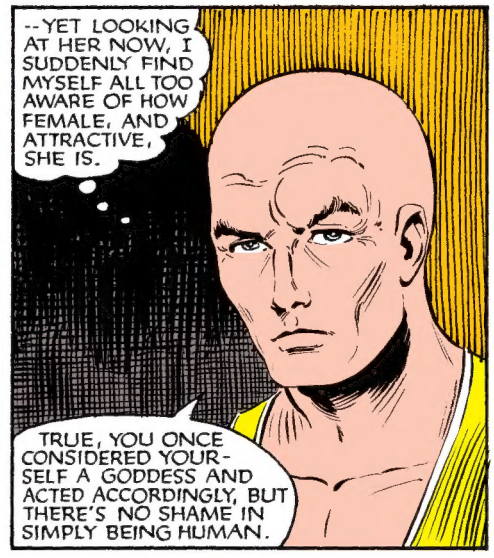

... AND YOU COULD DO YOURSELF SERIOUS INJURY.
POINT WELL TAKEN. I DID LET MYSELF GET A BIT CARRIED AWAY. IN FUTURE, I'LL BEHAVE.
IT IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
PROFESSOR, WERE YOU AN ATHLETE ?
IN COLLEGE, I LOVED SPORTS-- BUT I HAD TO GIVE IT UP.

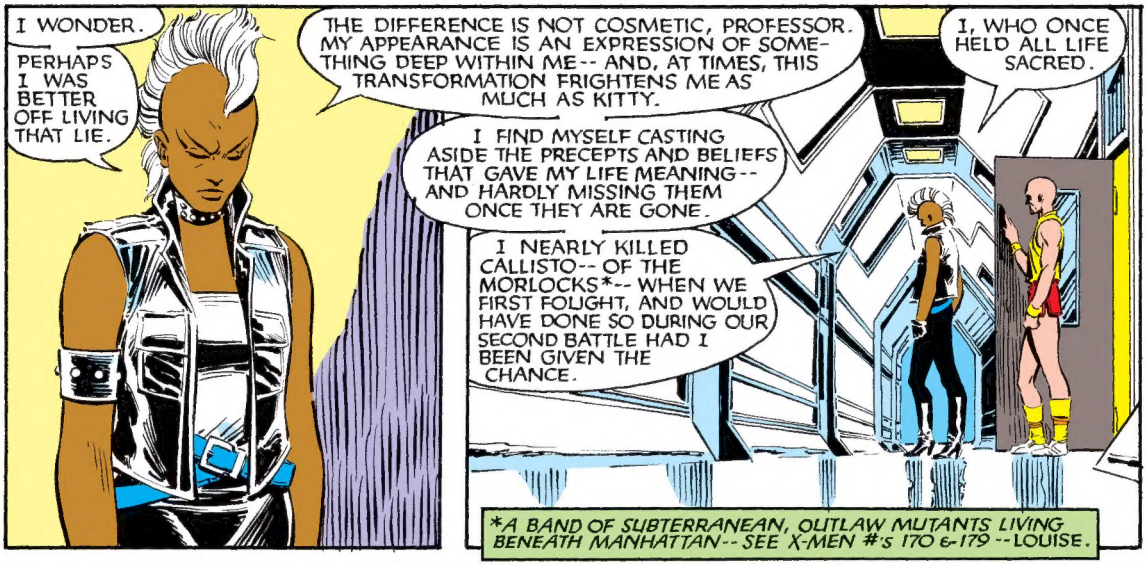
I COULD READ THE OPPOSING TEAM'S THOUGHTS, YOU SEE. I KNEW THEIR PLANS THE MOMENT THEY DID AND WAS ABLE TO COUNTER THEM WITH EASE. IT WAS A CRUELLY UNFAIR ADVANTAGE -- IT TOOK ALL THE JOY OUT OF THE GAME.
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DISHONORABLE TO KEEP PLAYING-- SO I QUIT. I HATED MY PSI-TALENT THEN, I'D HAVE GIVEN ANYTHING TO BE RID OF IT.

WHEN I LEARNED I COULD CONTROL THE WEATHER, I THOUGHT IT WAS SO WONDERFUL. I HAD NO CONCEPTION OF THE RESPONSIBILITY SUCH POWER ENTAILED.
BUT I SOON LEARNED.

I WISH THE COST HAD NOT BEEN SO DEAR.
ORORO, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

NOT ACCORDING TO KITTY. TO HER, I HAVE BECOME A MONSTER.
WELL, YOU'VE CERTAINLY CHANGED.
FOR BETTER OR WORSE?
HOW EXTRAORDINARY! I'VE NEVER THOUGHT OF STORM AS A WOMAN --SHE ALWAYS SEEMED BEYOND SUCH THINGS--

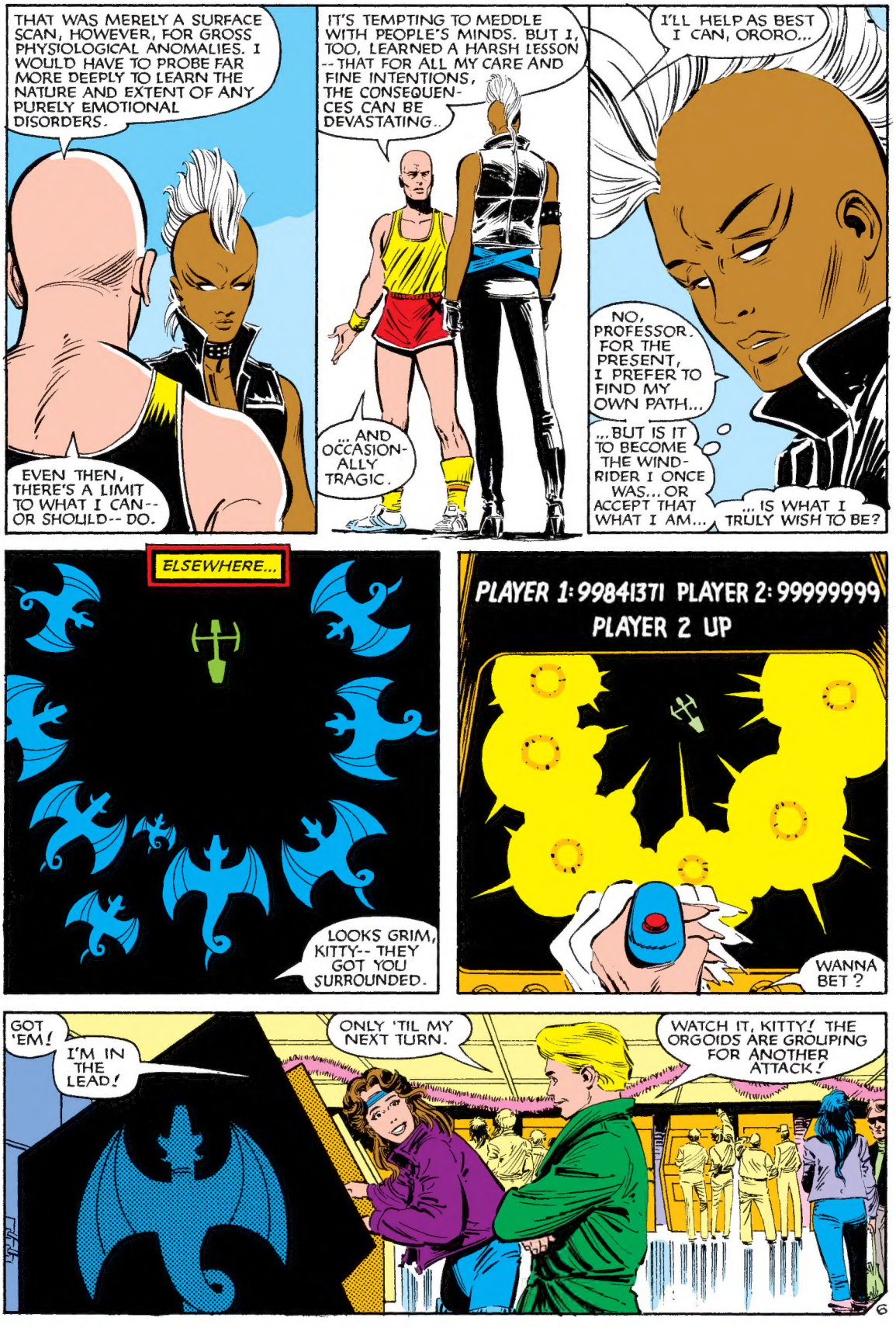

--YET LOOKING AT HER NOW, I SUDDENLY FIND MYSELF ALL TOO AWARE OF HOW FEMALE, AND ATTRACTIVE, SHE IS.
TRUE, YOU ONCE CONSIDERED YOURSELF A GODDESS AND ACTED ACCORDINGLY, BUT THERE'S NO SHAME IN SIMPLY BEING HUMAN.


I WONDER.
PERHAPS I WAS BETTER OFF LIVING THAT LIE.
THE DIFFERENCE IS NOT COSMETIC, PROFESSOR. MY APPEARANCE IS AN EXPRESSION OF SOMETHING DEEP WITHIN ME-- AND, AT TIMES, THIS TRANSFORMATION FRIGHTENS ME AS MUCH AS KITTY.
I, WHO ONCE HELD ALL LIFE SACRED.
I FIND MYSELF CASTING ASIDE THE PRECEPTS AND BELIEFS THAT GAVE MY LIFE MEANING-- AND HARDLY MISSING THEM ONCE THEY ARE GONE.
I NEARLY KILLED CALLISTO-- OF THE MORLOCKS*-- WHEN WE FIRST FOUGHT, AND WOULD HAVE DONE SO DURING OUR SECOND BATTLE HAD I BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE.
*A BAND OF SUBTERRANEAN, OUTLAW MUTANTS LIVING BENEATH MANHATTAN-- SEE X-MEN #'s 170 & 179 --LOUISE.

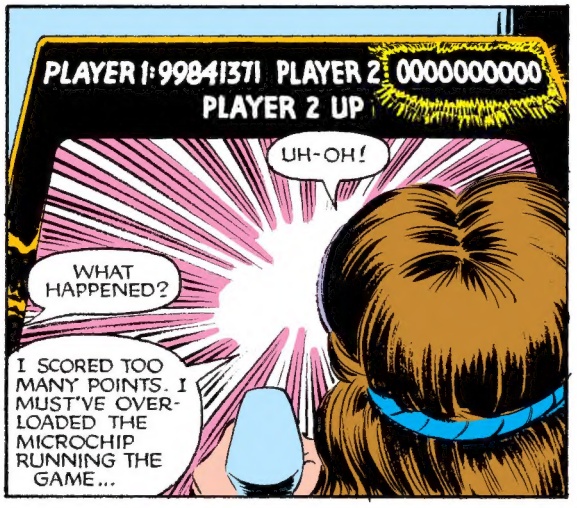
SOMETIMES, I THINK, I FEAR-- I... HOPE--
-- I MUST BE INSANE.

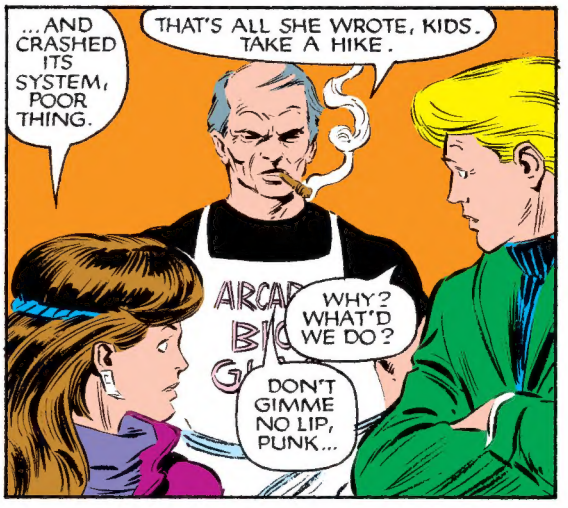
MY PSI-PROBE REVEALS...

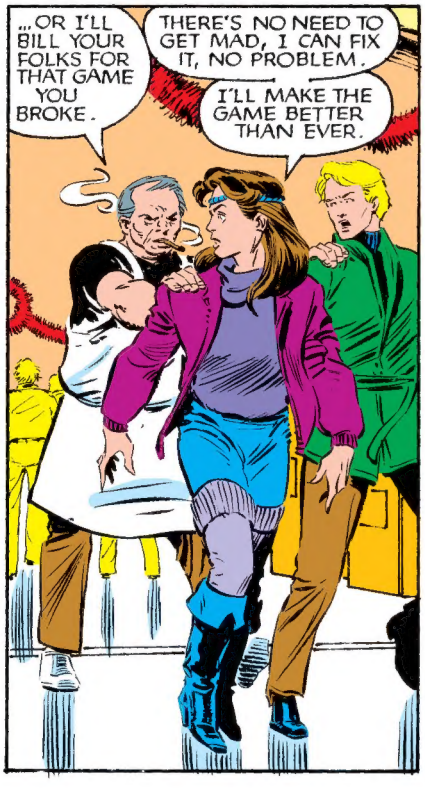
...NO MENTAL ILLNESS.


THAT WAS MERELY A SURFACE SCAN, HOWEVER, FOR GROSS PHYSIOLOGICAL ANOMALIES. I WOULD HAVE TO PROBE FAR MORE DEEPLY TO LEARN THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ANY PURELY EMOTIONAL DISORDERS.
EVEN THEN, THERE'S A LIMIT TO WHAT I CAN-- OR SHOULD-- DO.
IT'S TEMPTING TO MEDDLE WITH PEOPLE'S MINDS. BUT I, TOO, LEARNED A HARSH LESSON -- THAT FOR ALL MY CARE AND FINE INTENTIONS, THE CONSEQUENCES CAN BE DEVASTATING..
... AND OCCASIONALLY TRAGIC.
I'LL HELP AS BEST I CAN, ORORO...
NO, PROFESSOR. FOR THE PRESENT, I PREFER TO FIND MY OWN PATH...
...BUT IS IT TO BECOME THE WINDRIDER I ONCE WAS... OR ACCEPT THAT WHAT I AM...
... IS WHAT I TRULY WISH TO BE?
ELSEWHERE...
LOOKS GRIM, KITTY-- THEY GOT YOU SURROUNDED.
PLAYER 1: 99841371 PLAYER 2: 99999999
PLAYER 2 UP
WANNA BET?
GOT 'EM!
I'M IN THE LEAD!
ONLY 'TIL MY NEXT TURN.
WATCH IT, KITTY! THE ORGOIDS ARE GROUPING FOR ANOTHER ATTACK!

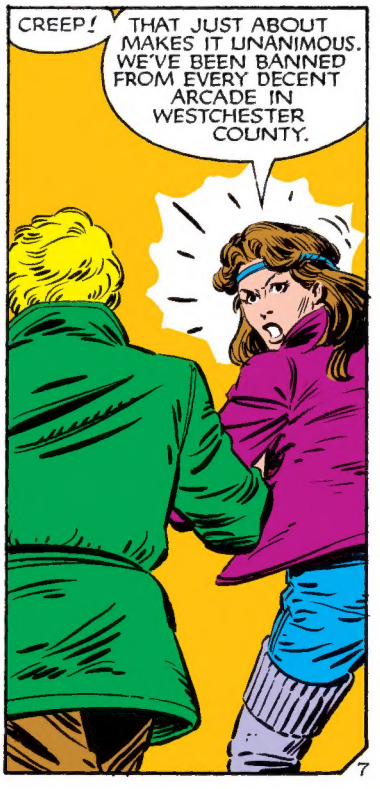
WHOOPS!
THANKS FOR THE WARNING, DOUG. THE SUCKER ALMOST NAILED ME.
MY PLEASURE.
OOM


PLAYER 1: 99841371 PLAYER 2: 0000000000
PLAYER 2 UP
UH-OH!
WHAT HAPPENED?
I SCORED TOO MANY POINTS. I MUST'VE OVER-LOADED THE MICROCHIP RUNNING THE GAME...

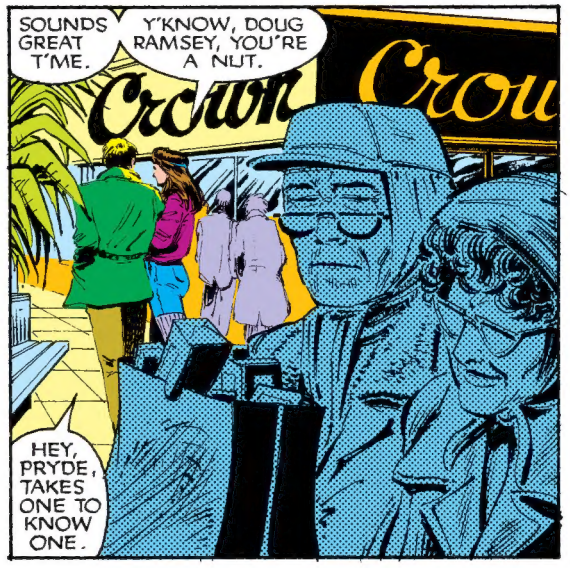

...AND CRASHED ITS SYSTEM, POOR THING.
THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE, KIDS. TAKE A HIKE.
WHY? WHAT'D WE DO?
DON'T GIMME NO LIP, PUNK...

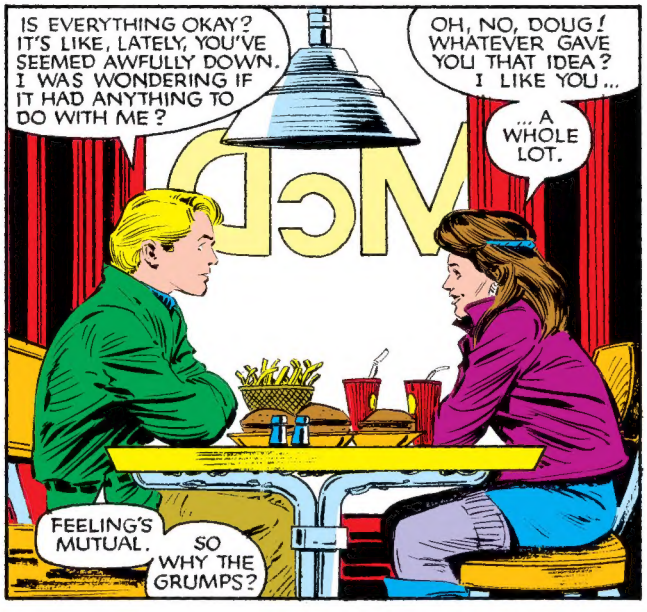

...OR I'LL BILL YOUR FOLKS FOR THAT GAME YOU BROKE.
THERE'S NO NEED TO GET MAD, I CAN FIX IT, NO PROBLEM.
I'LL MAKE THE GAME BETTER THAN EVER.

SURE YOU WILL. LOOK, I'M TIRED O' YOU TWO BRATS HOGGIN' MY CONSOLES, PLAYIN' FER HOURS ON ONE LOUSY QUARTER. YOU'RE RUININ' MY BUSINESS.
I WANT YOU OUT-- AN' I DON'T WANT YOU COMIN' BACK. EVER!

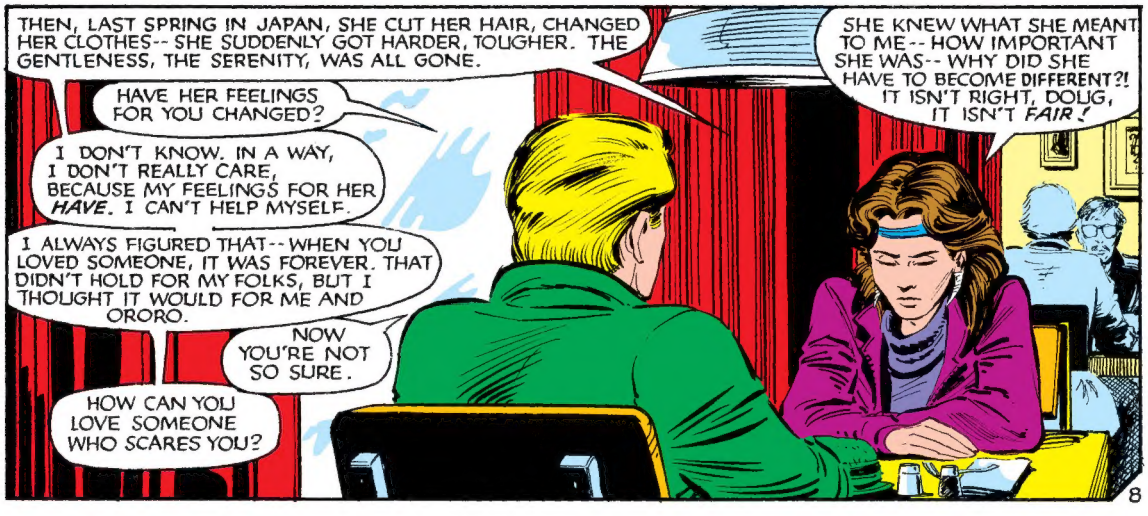

CREEP!
THAT JUST ABOUT MAKES IT UNANIMOUS. WE'VE BEEN BANNED FROM EVERY DECENT ARCADE IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY.

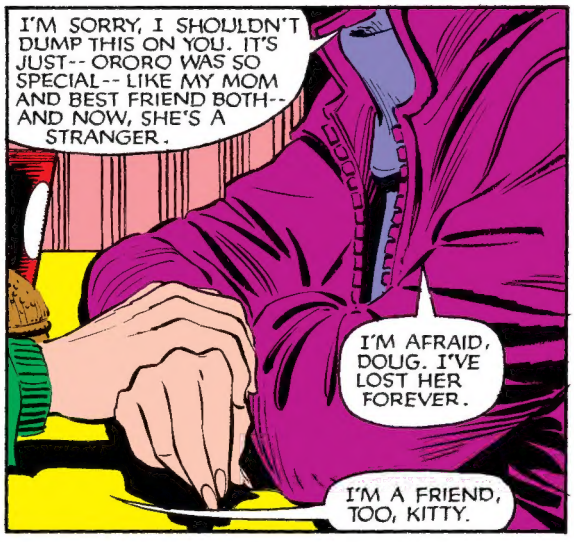
OH, THE SHAME, THE DISGRACE-- HOWEVER WILL WE ENDURE IT, WHATEVER WILL WE DO? OUR LIVES ARE AT AN END!
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, WILLYA? PEOPLE ARE LOOKING!
OKAY, HOW 'BOUT WE DROWN OUR SORROWS WITH LUNCH?

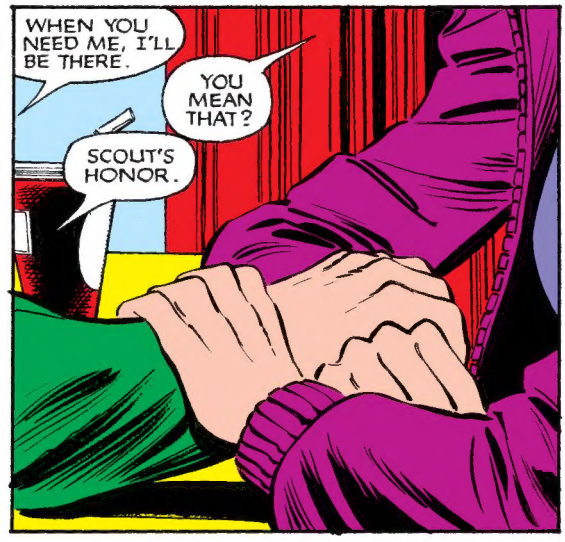

SOUNDS GREAT T'ME.
Y'KNOW, DOUG RAMSEY, YOU'RE A NUT.
Crown
HEY, PRYDE, TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE.

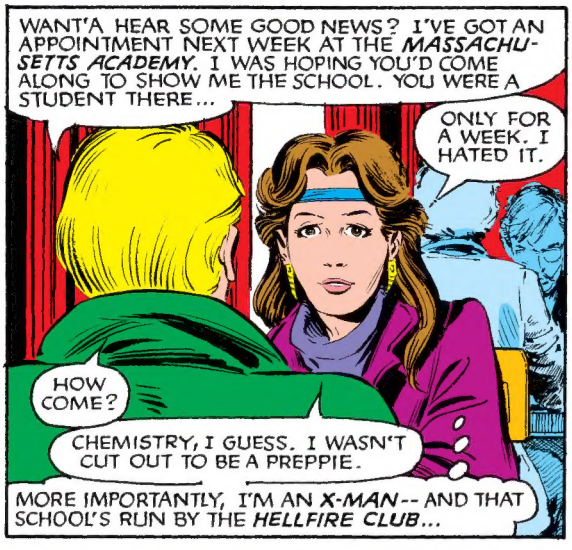

IS EVERYTHING OKAY? IT'S LIKE, LATELY, YOU'VE SEEMED AWFULLY DOWN. I WAS WONDERING IF IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME?
OH, NO, DOUG! WHATEVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA? I LIKE YOU...
... A WHOLE LOT.
FEELING'S MUTUAL.
SO WHY THE GRUMPS?

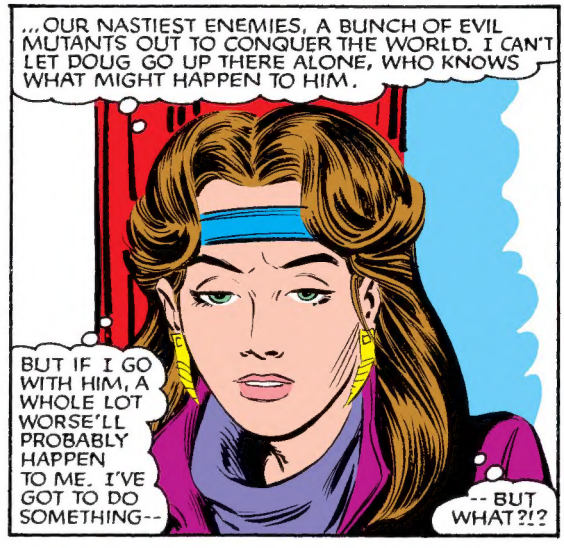
IT'S... ORORO.
WHEN WE FIRST MET, I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PERSON-- INSIDE AND OUT-- I'D EVER SEEN.

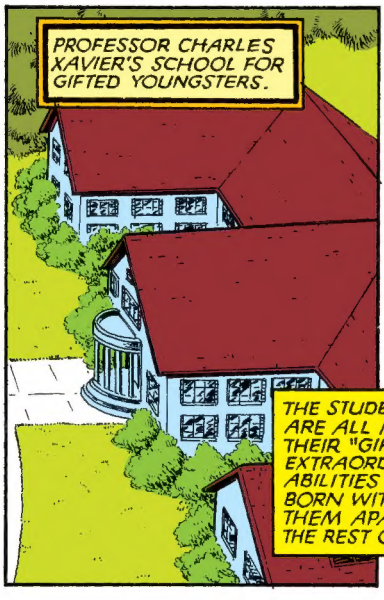

THEN, LAST SPRING IN JAPAN, SHE CUT HER HAIR, CHANGED HER CLOTHES-- SHE SUDDENLY GOT HARDER, TOUGHER. THE GENTLENESS, THE SERENITY, WAS ALL GONE.
HAVE HER FEELINGS FOR YOU CHANGED?
I DON'T KNOW. IN A WAY, I DON'T REALLY CARE, BECAUSE MY FEELINGS FOR HER *HAVE*. I CAN'T HELP MYSELF.
I ALWAYS FIGURED THAT-- WHEN YOU LOVED SOMEONE, IT WAS FOREVER. THAT DIDN'T HOLD FOR MY FOLKS, BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD FOR ME AND ORORO.
NOW YOU'RE NOT SO SURE.
HOW CAN YOU LOVE SOMEONE WHO SCARES YOU?
SHE KNEW WHAT SHE MEANT TO ME-- HOW IMPORTANT SHE WAS-- WHY DID SHE HAVE TO BECOME DIFFERENT?! IT ISN'T RIGHT, DOUG, IT ISN'T *FAIR*!

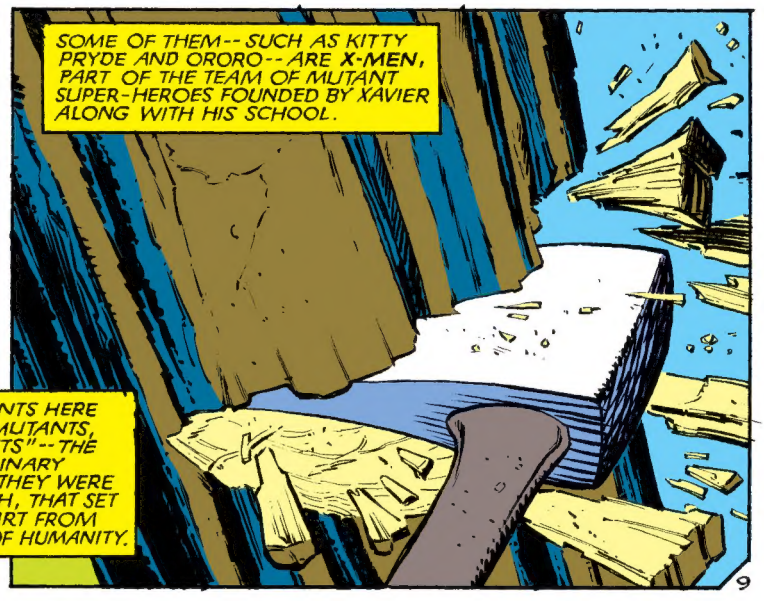

I'M SORRY, I SHOULDN'T DUMP THIS ON YOU. IT'S JUST-- ORORO WAS SO SPECIAL-- LIKE MY MOM AND BEST FRIEND BOTH-- AND NOW, SHE'S A STRANGER.
I'M AFRAID, DOUG. I'VE LOST HER FOREVER.
I'M A FRIEND, TOO, KITTY.

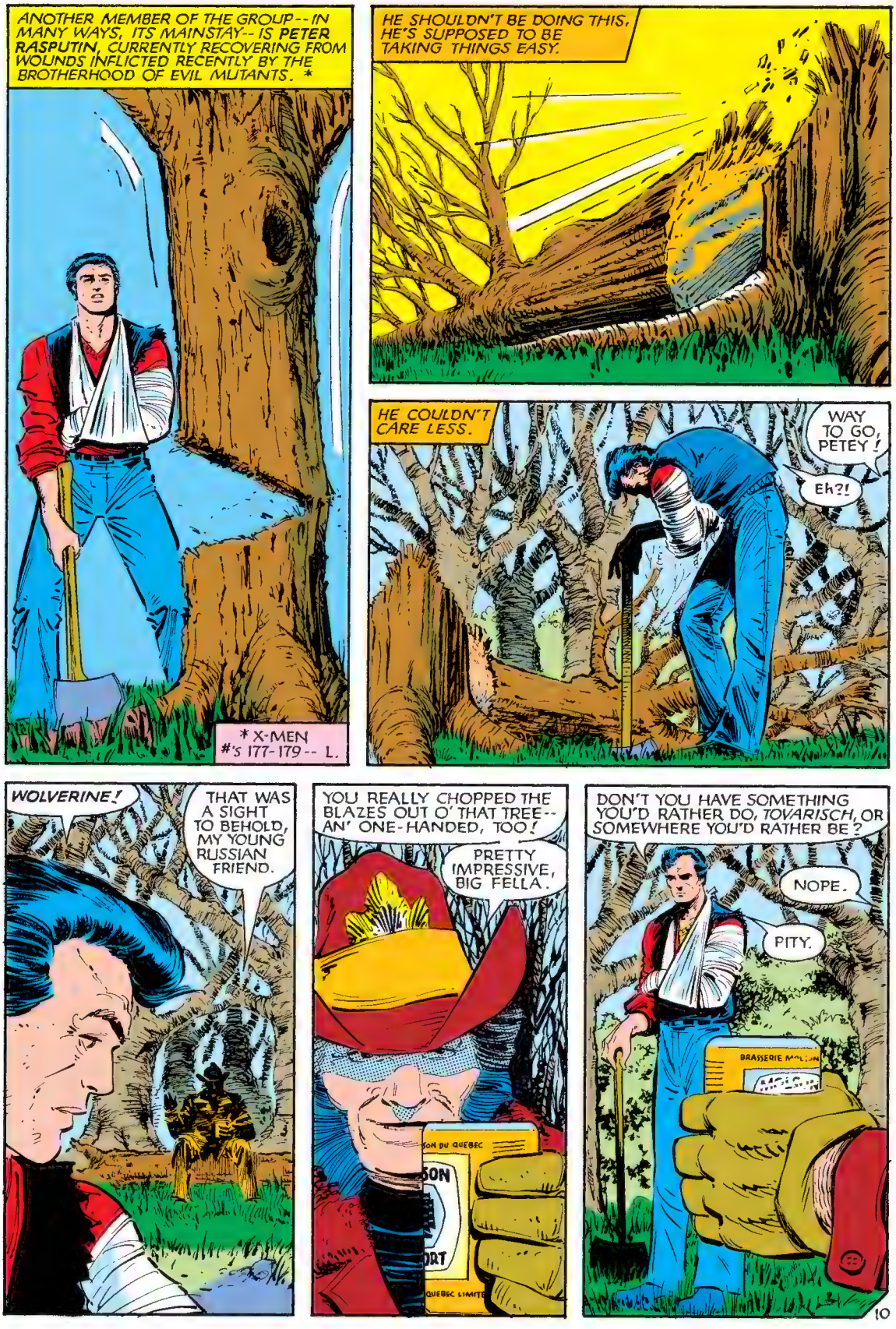

WHEN YOU NEED ME, I'LL BE THERE.
YOU MEAN THAT?
SCOUT'S HONOR.

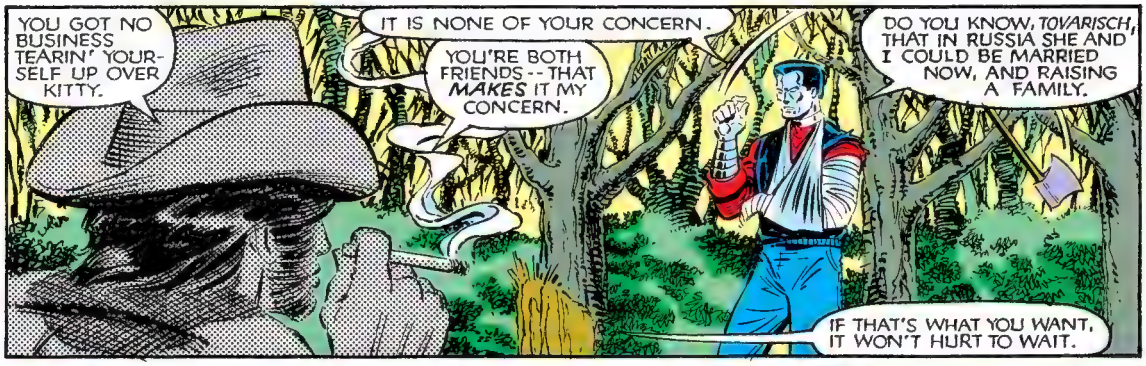

WANT'A HEAR SOME GOOD NEWS? I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT NEXT WEEK AT THE *MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY*. I WAS HOPING YOU'D COME ALONG TO SHOW ME THE SCHOOL. YOU WERE A STUDENT THERE...
ONLY FOR A WEEK. I HATED IT.
HOW COME?
CHEMISTRY, I GUESS. I WASN'T CUT OUT TO BE A PREPPIE.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, I'M AN *X-MAN*-- AND THAT SCHOOL'S RUN BY THE *HELLFIRE CLUB*...


...OUR NASTIEST ENEMIES, A BUNCH OF EVIL MUTANTS OUT TO CONQUER THE WORLD. I CAN'T LET DOUG GO UP THERE ALONE, WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO HIM.
BUT IF I GO WITH HIM, A WHOLE LOT WORSE'LL PROBABLY HAPPEN TO ME. I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING--
-- BUT WHAT?!?


PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
THE STUDENTS HERE ARE ALL MUTANTS, THEIR "GIFTS"--THE EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES THEY WERE BORN WITH, THAT SET THEM APART FROM THE REST OF HUMANITY.

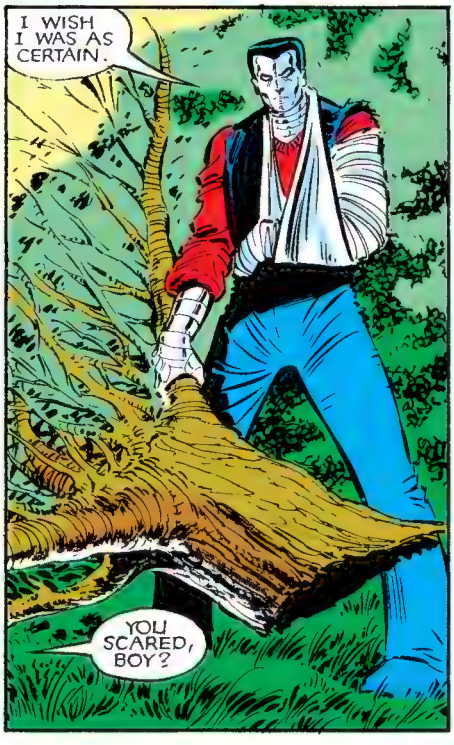

*SOME OF THEM--SUCH AS KITTY PRYDE AND ORORO--ARE **X-MEN**, PART OF THE TEAM OF MUTANT SUPER-HEROES FOUNDED BY XAVIER ALONG WITH HIS SCHOOL.*


ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP -- IN MANY WAYS, ITS MAINSTAY -- IS PETER RASPUTIN, CURRENTLY RECOVERING FROM WOUNDS INFLICTED RECENTLY BY THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS. *
* X-MEN #'s 177-179 -- L.
HE SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS. HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING THINGS EASY.
HE COULDN'T CARE LESS.
WAY TO GO, PETEY!
EH?!
WOLVERINE!
THAT WAS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD, MY YOUNG RUSSIAN FRIEND.
YOU REALLY CHOPPED THE BLAZES OUT O' THAT TREE -- AN' ONE-HANDED, TOO!
PRETTY IMPRESSIVE, BIG FELLA.
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMETHING YOU'D RATHER DO, TOVARISCH, OR SOMEWHERE YOU'D RATHER BE?
NOPE.
PITY.


YOU GOT NO BUSINESS TEARIN' YOURSELF UP OVER KITTY.
IT IS NONE OF YOUR CONCERN.
YOU'RE BOTH FRIENDS -- THAT MAKES IT MY CONCERN.
DO YOU KNOW, TOVARISCH, THAT IN RUSSIA SHE AND I COULD BE MARRIED NOW, AND RAISING A FAMILY.
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, IT WON'T HURT TO WAIT.

I THOUGHT IT WAS. AND THAT I COULD.
IT NEVER ENTERED MY HEAD THAT KATYA FELT DIFFERENTLY.

SHE GAVE HERSELF TO THE MORLOCKS TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, BUB. I FIGURE THAT GIVES A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF WHERE SHE STANDS.


I WISH I WAS AS CERTAIN.
YOU SCARED, BOY?

DOUGLAS RAMSEY IS EVERYTHING I AM NOT -- AND CAN NEVER BE. WATCHING KITTY WITH HIM, LISTENING TO THEM, BRINGS HOME SOME BRUTAL TRUTHS --
-- I AM AN IGNORANT PEASANT, FROM A SOCIETY AND CULTURE AS ALIEN TO HER AS ANY WE'VE ENCOUNTERED IN SPACE.
KITTY WAS A DREAM, MY FRIEND. PERHAPS IT IS TIME AT LAST TO WAKE AND FACE REALITY.

IF THAT'S WHAT YOU TRULY BELIEVE, PETER -- ABOUT YOURSELF AS WELL AS HER --
-- YOU'VE LOST ALREADY, MORE THAN YOU KNOW.

THE BRONX BOTANICAL GARDENS...

THE AFTERNOON IS CHILL AND OVERCAST, WITH MORE THAN A HINT OF SNOW IN THE AIR. THE MAJESTIC TREES THAT CROWD THE PARK NOW ARE STRIPPED TO BARE BRANCHES, THE GROUND BENEATH THEM FROZEN ROCK HARD.

AFTER A SPLENDID INDIAN SUMMER, WINTER HAS COME TO NEW YORK WITH A VENGEANCE.

BUT INSIDE THE VAST GREEN-HOUSES, TIME SEEMINGLY STANDS STILL, AND THE INEXORABLE MARCH OF THE SEASONS IS DENIED. FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM, COVERING THE FLOOR WITH A CARPET OF TRULY LIVING COLOR...

... AND FILLING THE AIR WITH THEIR GLORIOUS HEADY SCENT.

ORORO COMES HERE OFTEN...

...TO VISIT OLD, DEAR FRIENDS-- THE BLOSSOMS THAT ONCE GRACED HER ATTIC LOFT AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL.

MISSED ME, MY LITTLE ONES? IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU, TOO.

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR NEW HOME? ARE YOU BEING TREATED WELL?

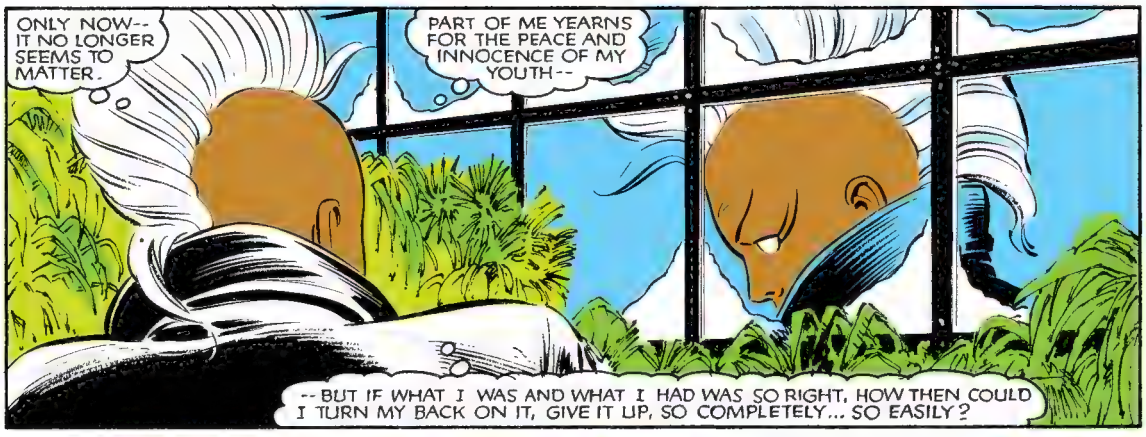
"IN MANY WAYS, THIS PLACE REMINDS ME...

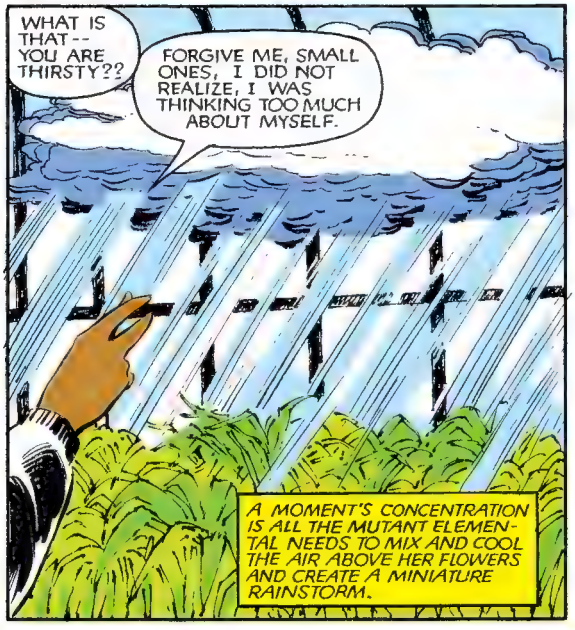
"... OF MY OLD HOME, IN AFRICA.

"HOW BEAUTIFUL AND PEACEFUL THAT WAS, TO LIVE IN PERFECT HARMONY WITH NATURE.

"I FEARED, NOT LONG AGO, THAT I HAD LOST THAT SPECIAL RAPPORT WITH THE EARTH...

"... BUT ON MY FIRST TRIP TO THESE GARDENS-- INDEED, MY FIRST STEPS INTO THIS GREENHOUSE-- I REALIZED I AM AS AWARE OF LIFE AS I EVER WAS.

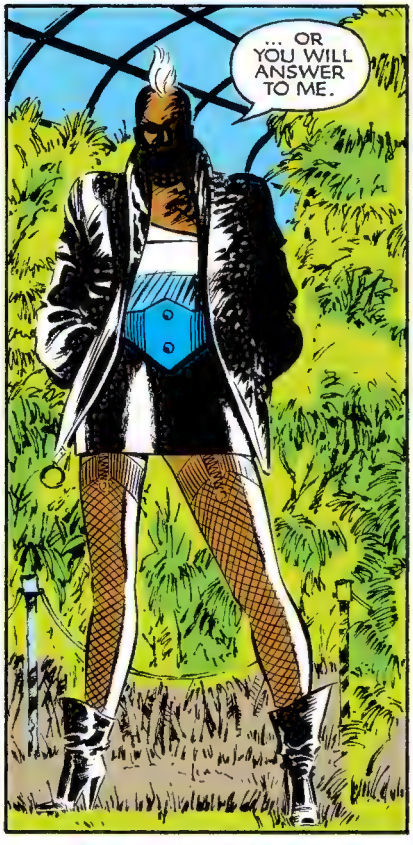

ONLY NOW-- IT NO LONGER SEEMS TO MATTER.
PART OF ME YEARNS FOR THE PEACE AND INNOCENCE OF MY YOUTH--
--BUT IF WHAT I WAS AND WHAT I HAD WAS SO RIGHT, HOW THEN COULD I TURN MY BACK ON IT, GIVE IT UP, SO COMPLETELY... SO EASILY?


WHAT IS THAT-- YOU ARE THIRSTY??
FORGIVE ME, SMALL ONES, I DID NOT REALIZE, I WAS THINKING TOO MUCH ABOUT MYSELF.
A MOMENT'S CONCENTRATION IS ALL THE MUTANT ELEMENTAL NEEDS TO MIX AND COOL THE AIR ABOVE HER FLOWERS AND CREATE A MINIATURE RAINSTORM.

BUT THEN...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! LEAVE US ALONE-- AIIOW!
A VOICE-- CRYING OUT IN PAIN!
I MUST GO, FRIENDS. I MAY BE NEEDED ELSEWHERE.

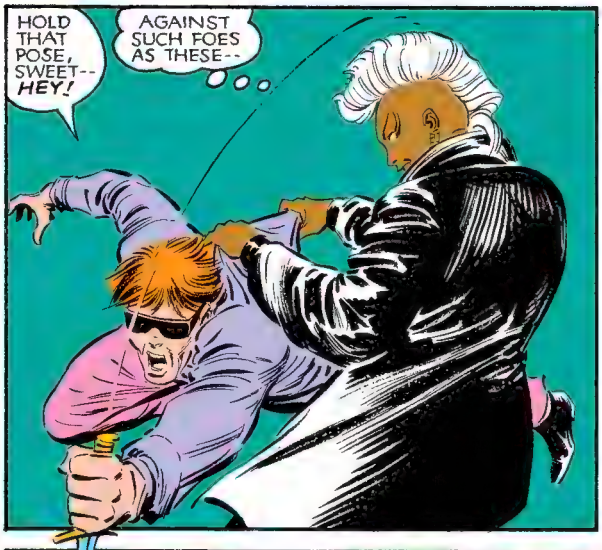
YER OL' MAN SHOULDN'T'A GOT UPPITY, LADY.
ALL WE WANTED WAS SOME BREAD.
PLEASE, I'LL GIVE YOU MONEY--!

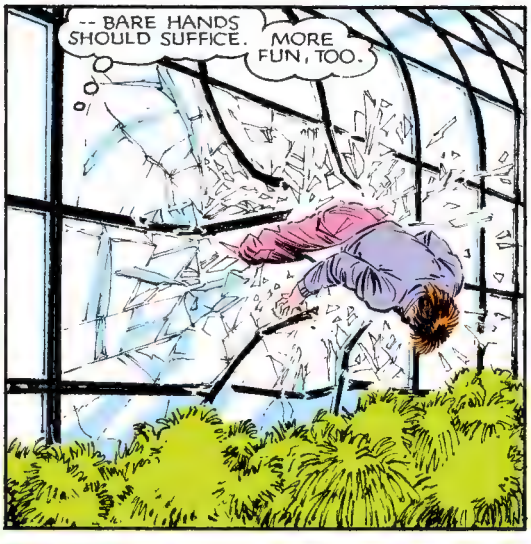
NOT GOOD ENOUGH. YOU WANT'A SAVE YOUR MAN, YOU GOTTA MAKE US REAL HAPPY...
I SUGGEST YOU LEAVE THESE PEOPLE ALONE...
HUH?! WHO--?!!
...AND BE ON YOUR WAY...

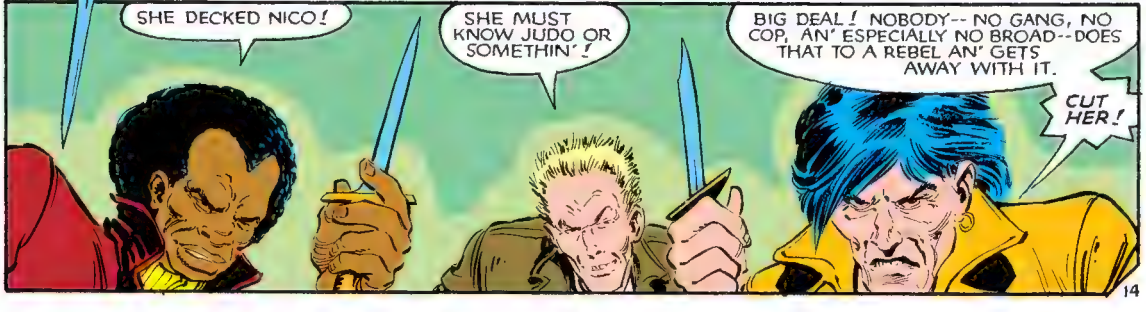

... OR YOU WILL ANSWER TO ME.

WHOA! PARTY TIME TONIGHT, eh, BRO'?
FOX, YOU JUST MADE ONE BIG MISTAKE.
NO BABE TELLS THE RUSHER STREET REBELS WHAT TO DO.

Oh, REALLY?


HOLD THAT POSE, SWEET-- HEY!
AGAINST SUCH FOES AS THESE--


-- BARE HANDS SHOULD SUFFICE.
MORE FUN, TOO.


SHE DECKED NICO!
SHE MUST KNOW JUDO OR SOMETHIN'!
BIG DEAL! NOBODY-- NO GANG, NO COP, AN' ESPECIALLY NO BROAD--DOES THAT TO A REBEL AN' GETS AWAY WITH IT.
CUT HER!

IT WILL TAKE BETTER MEN THAN YOU...

...TO EVEN COME CLOSE!

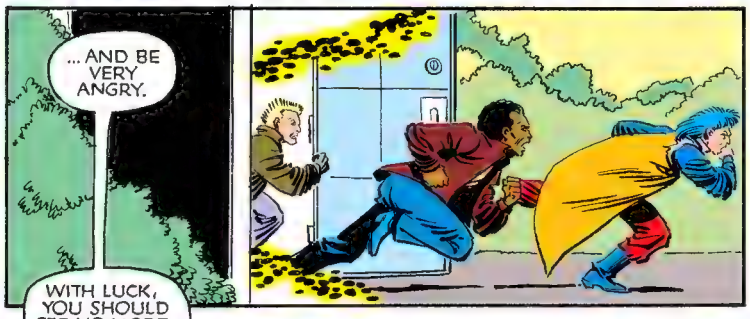
THE FOURTH MAN IS MOVING IN FROM BEHIND.

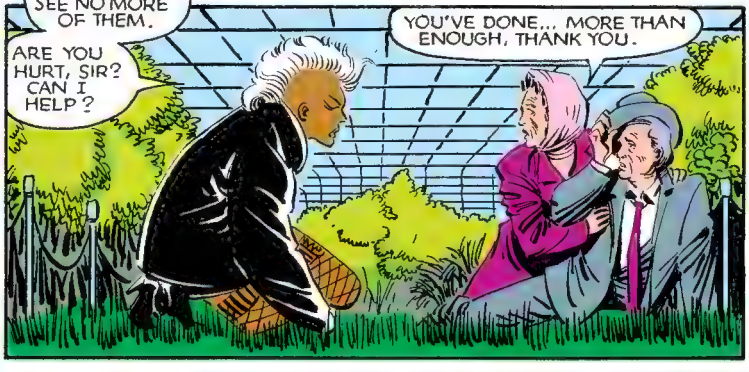
I MUST PIVOT-- JUST SO-- AS WOLVERINE TAUGHT ME...
... AND LET MY OPPONENT'S OWN MOMENTUM...

...DO THE REST.
BEWARE POISON OAK

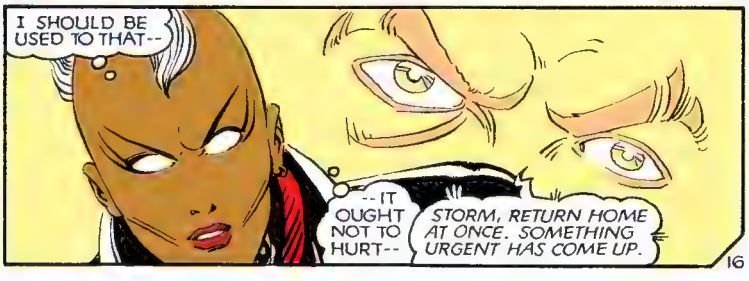
FINALLY, THE COUP DE GRACE-- A' LITTLE SOMETHING FOR THEM TO REMEMBER ME BY.
OVER THE GREENHOUSE--AND ONLY THE GREENHOUSE--THE SKY TURNS BLACK AND UGLY, LIGHTNING FLASHING BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN WHILE MASSIVE CLAPS OF THUNDER SHAKE THE EARTH. TO COMPLETE THE EFFECT, ORORO ENSHROUDS HERSELF IN St. ELMO'S FIRE...

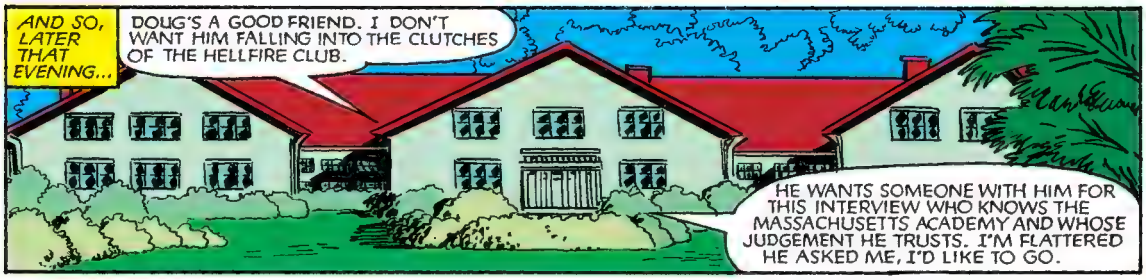
... AND THEN THE MUGGERS AS WELL.
I SUGGEST, GENTLEMEN, YOU RENOUNCE YOUR EVIL WAYS. IF YOU DO NOT, I SHALL LEARN OF IT...

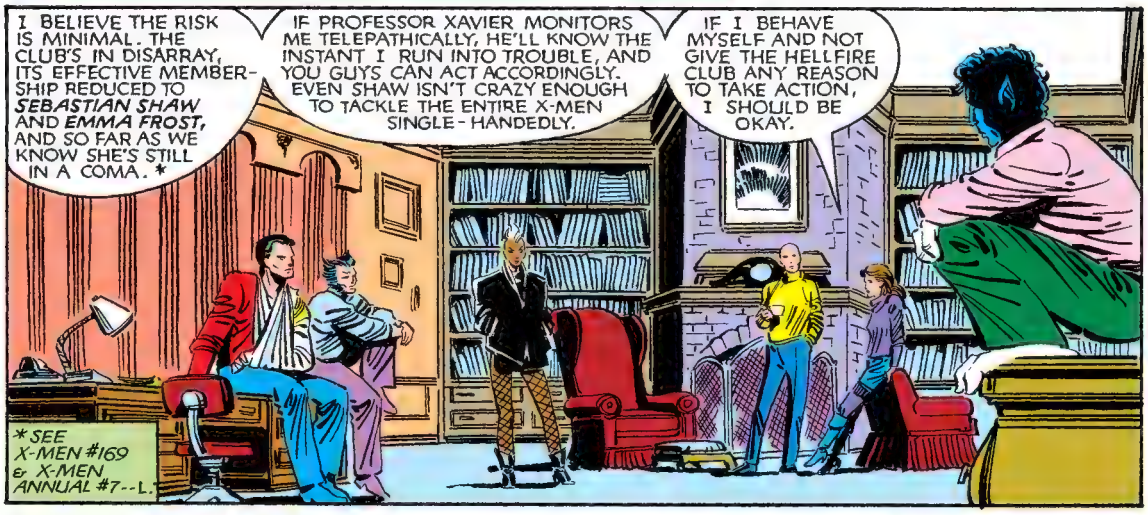

... AND BE VERY ANGRY.

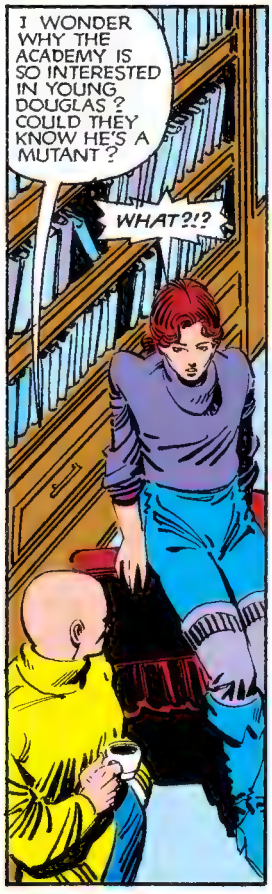

WITH LUCK, YOU SHOULD SEE NO MORE OF THEM.
ARE YOU HURT, SIR? CAN I HELP?
YOU'VE DONE... MORE THAN ENOUGH, THANK YOU.

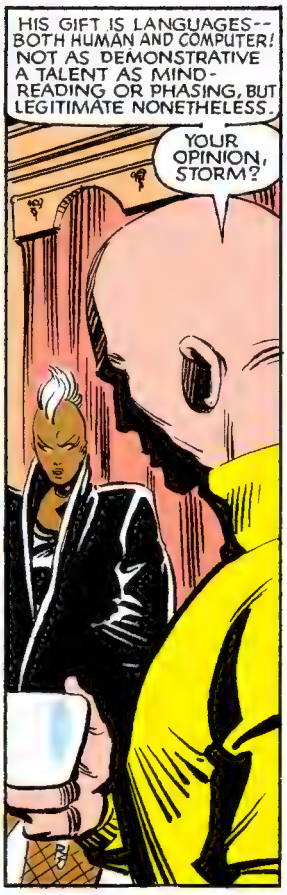
WE DON'T WANT TO BE ANY MORE TROUBLE, WE'D BEST BE GOING OURSELVES.
I SAVED THEIR LIVES-- YET THEY ARE MORE TERRIFIED OF ME THAN OF THE THUGS WHO ATTACKED THEM.


I SHOULD BE USED TO THAT--
--IT OUGHT NOT TO HURT--
STORM, RETURN HOME AT ONCE. SOMETHING URGENT HAS COME UP.


AND SO, LATER THAT EVENING...
DOUG'S A GOOD FRIEND. I DON'T WANT HIM FALLING INTO THE CLUTCHES OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB.
HE WANTS SOMEONE WITH HIM FOR THIS INTERVIEW WHO KNOWS THE MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY AND WHOSE JUDGEMENT HE TRUSTS. I'M FLATTERED HE ASKED ME, I'D LIKE TO GO.

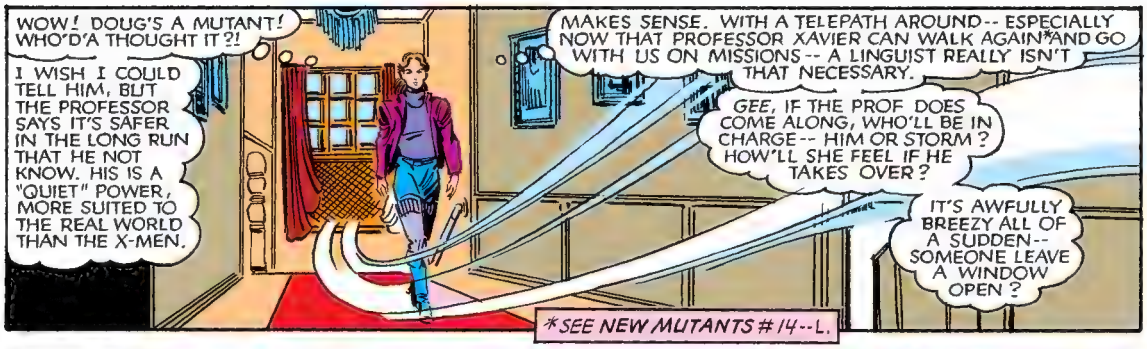

I BELIEVE THE RISK IS MINIMAL. THE CLUB'S IN DISARRAY, ITS EFFECTIVE MEMBERSHIP REDUCED TO SEBASTIAN SHAW AND EMMA FROST, AND SO FAR AS WE KNOW SHE'S STILL IN A COMA. *
IF PROFESSOR XAVIER MONITORS ME TELEPATHICALLY, HE'LL KNOW THE INSTANT I RUN INTO TROUBLE, AND YOU GUYS CAN ACT ACCORDINGLY. EVEN SHAW ISN'T CRAZY ENOUGH TO TACKLE THE ENTIRE X-MEN SINGLE-HANDEDLY.
IF I BEHAVE MYSELF AND NOT GIVE THE HELLFIRE CLUB ANY REASON TO TAKE ACTION, I SHOULD BE OKAY.
*SEE X-MEN #169 & X-MEN ANNUAL #7--L.

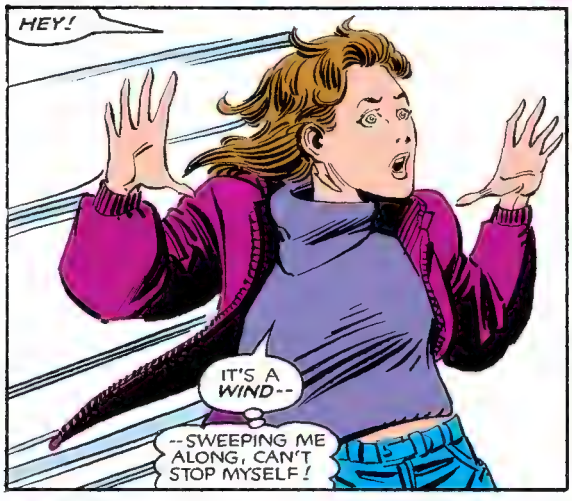

I WONDER WHY THE ACADEMY IS SO INTERESTED IN YOUNG DOUGLAS? COULD THEY KNOW HE'S A MUTANT?
WHAT?!?


HIS GIFT IS LANGUAGES--BOTH HUMAN AND COMPUTER! NOT AS DEMONSTRATIVE A TALENT AS MIND-READING OR PHASING, BUT LEGITIMATE NONETHELESS.
YOUR OPINION, STORM?

I DO NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF KITTY WALKING INTO THE ENEMY CAMP BY HERSELF, BUT HER PLAN COVERS EVERY CONTINGENCY.
WITH RESERVATIONS, I APPROVE.

AS DO I.


WOW! DOUG'S A MUTANT! WHO'D'A THOUGHT IT?!
I WISH I COULD TELL HIM, BUT THE PROFESSOR SAYS IT'S SAFER IN THE LONG RUN THAT HE NOT KNOW. HIS IS A "QUIET" POWER, MORE SUITED TO THE REAL WORLD THAN THE X-MEN.
MAKES SENSE. WITH A TELEPATH AROUND-- ESPECIALLY NOW THAT PROFESSOR XAVIER CAN WALK AGAIN* AND GO WITH US ON MISSIONS-- A LINGUIST REALLY ISN'T THAT NECESSARY.
GEE, IF THE PROF DOES COME ALONG, WHO'LL BE IN CHARGE-- HIM OR STORM? HOW'LL SHE FEEL IF HE TAKES OVER?
IT'S AWFULLY BREEZY ALL OF A SUDDEN-- SOMEONE LEAVE A WINDOW OPEN?
*SEE NEW MUTANTS #14--L.

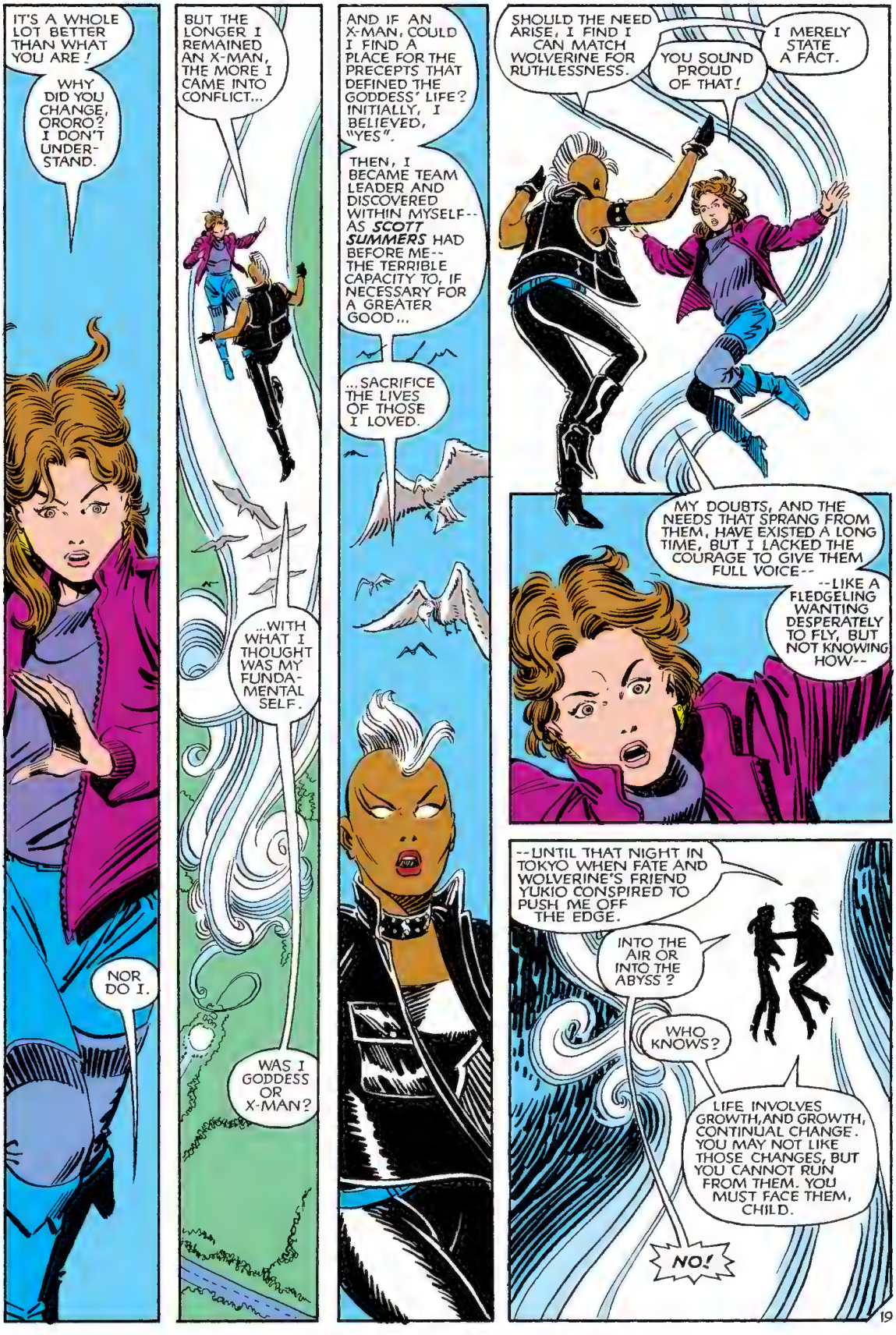

HEY!
IT'S A WIND--
--SWEEPING ME ALONG, CAN'T STOP MYSELF!

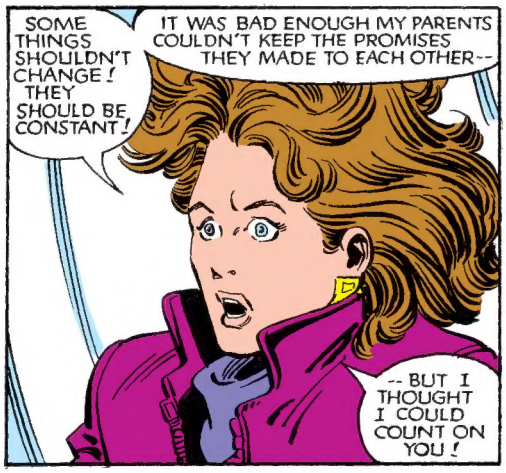
ORORO-- CUT IT OUT!
IT IS PAST TIME, KITTEN, WE HAD A TALK--

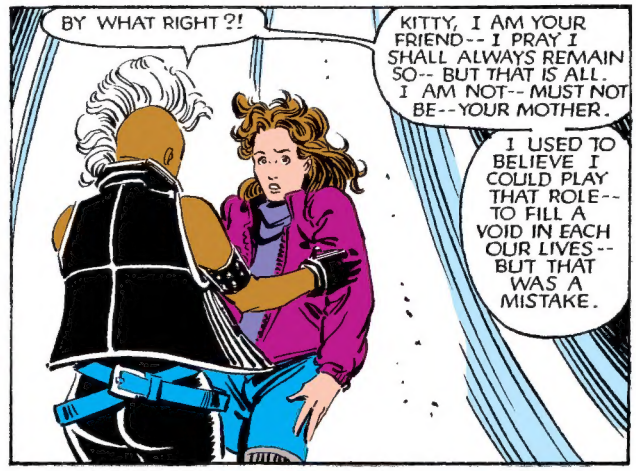
-- FAR FROM PRYING EYES OR EARS-- OR MINDS.
HOW HIGH UP ARE WE, IT MUST BE MILES!!
YOU COULD HAVE JUST ASKED, THERE WAS NO NEED TO BE SUCH A SHOW-OFF!

YOU SCARED ME HALF-TO-DEATH!
THE STORM YOU PREFER WOULD NOT HAVE DONE SO, CORRECT?
THAT'S RIGHT!

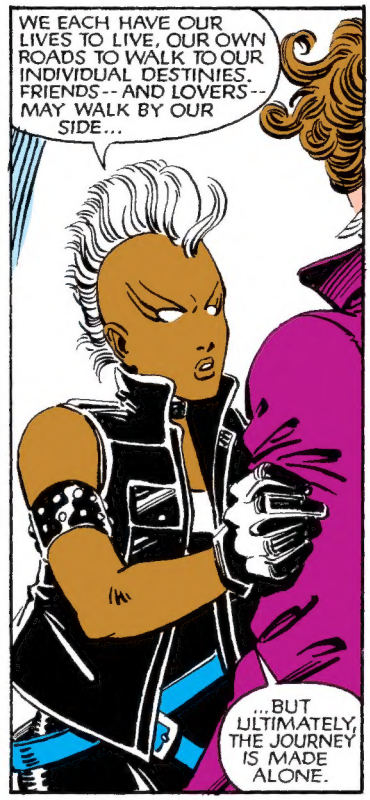
SO, FOR YOUR PEACE OF MIND...
... I MUST FORCE MYSELF TO BE SOMEONE-- SOMETHING-- I AM NOT?!


IT'S A WHOLE LOT BETTER THAN WHAT YOU ARE!
WHY DID YOU CHANGE, ORORO? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
NOR DO I.
BUT THE LONGER I REMAINED AN X-MAN, THE MORE I CAME INTO CONFLICT...
...WITH WHAT I THOUGHT WAS MY FUNDAMENTAL SELF.
WAS I GODDESS OR X-MAN?
AND IF AN X-MAN, COULD I FIND A PLACE FOR THE PRECEPTS THAT DEFINED THE GODDESS' LIFE? INITIALLY, I BELIEVED, "YES".
THEN, I BECAME TEAM LEADER AND DISCOVERED WITHIN MYSELF--AS SCOTT SUMMERS HAD BEFORE ME--THE TERRIBLE CAPACITY TO, IF NECESSARY FOR A GREATER GOOD...
...SACRIFICE THE LIVES OF THOSE I LOVED.
SHOULD THE NEED ARISE, I FIND I CAN MATCH WOLVERINE FOR RUTHLESSNESS.
YOU SOUND PROUD OF THAT!
I MERELY STATE A FACT.
MY DOUBTS, AND THE NEEDS THAT SPRANG FROM THEM, HAVE EXISTED A LONG TIME, BUT I LACKED THE COURAGE TO GIVE THEM FULL VOICE--
--LIKE A FLEDGELING WANTING DESPERATELY TO FLY, BUT NOT KNOWING HOW--
--UNTIL THAT NIGHT IN TOKYO WHEN FATE AND WOLVERINE'S FRIEND YUKIO CONSPIRED TO PUSH ME OFF THE EDGE.
INTO THE AIR OR INTO THE ABYSS?
WHO KNOWS?
LIFE INVOLVES GROWTH, AND GROWTH, CONTINUAL CHANGE. YOU MAY NOT LIKE THOSE CHANGES, BUT YOU CANNOT RUN FROM THEM. YOU MUST FACE THEM, CHILD.
NO!

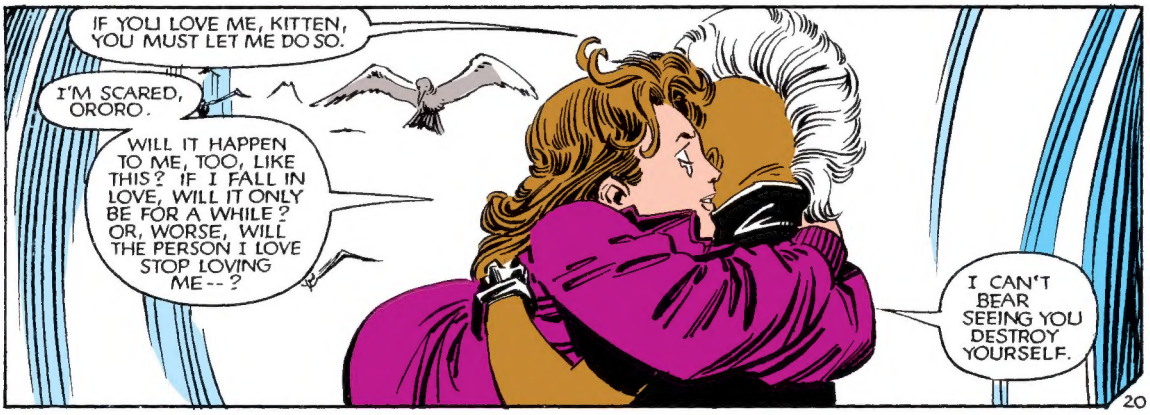

SOME THINGS SHOULDN'T CHANGE! THEY SHOULD BE CONSTANT!
IT WAS BAD ENOUGH MY PARENTS COULDN'T KEEP THE PROMISES THEY MADE TO EACH OTHER--
-- BUT I THOUGHT I COULD COUNT ON YOU!

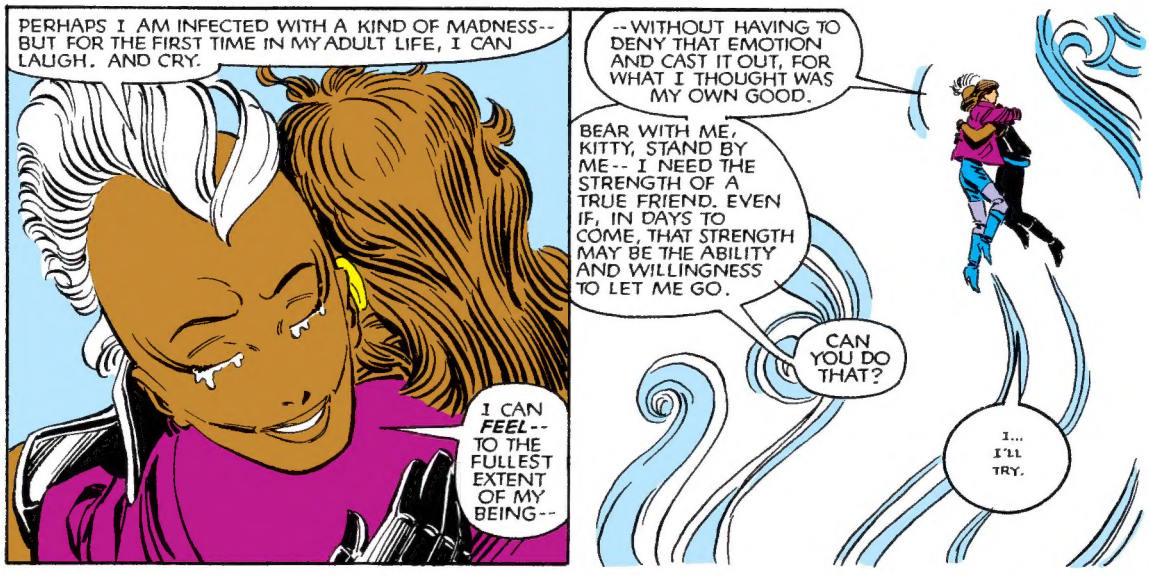

BY WHAT RIGHT?!
KITTY, I AM YOUR FRIEND-- I PRAY I SHALL ALWAYS REMAIN SO-- BUT THAT IS ALL. I AM NOT-- MUST NOT BE--YOUR MOTHER.
I USED TO BELIEVE I COULD PLAY THAT ROLE-- TO FILL A VOID IN EACH OUR LIVES-- BUT THAT WAS A MISTAKE.

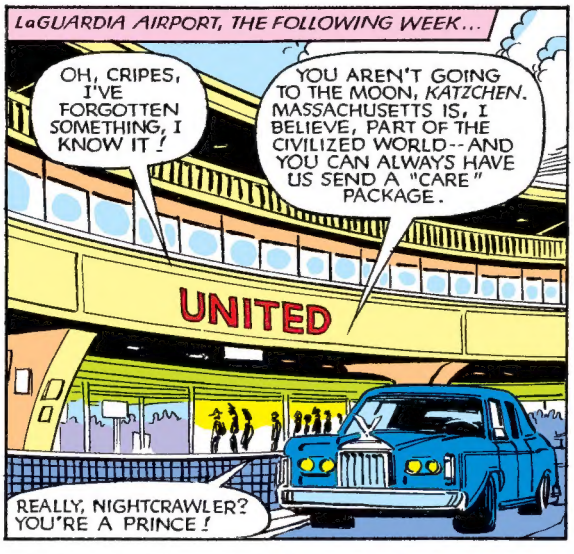
DON'T YOU LOVE ME?
WITH ALL MY HEART.
BUT YOU HAVE OTHER DEMANDS ON YOUR HEART, YOUR LOVE, DO YOU NOT? YOU TAKE SUCH FREEDOM FOR YOURSELF, WHY DO YOU DENY IT TO ME?


WE EACH HAVE OUR LIVES TO LIVE, OUR OWN ROADS TO WALK TO OUR INDIVIDUAL DESTINIES. FRIENDS-- AND LOVERS-- MAY WALK BY OUR SIDE...
...BUT ULTIMATELY, THE JOURNEY IS MADE ALONE.

I AM LEARNING THINGS ABOUT MYSELF I DO NOT LIKE...
... BUT I MUST KEEP LEARNING, STRIVING TO FIND MY TRUE SELF-- MY PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS. I MUST KNOW WHO I AM. I MUST LIVE MY LIFE AS I SEE FIT.

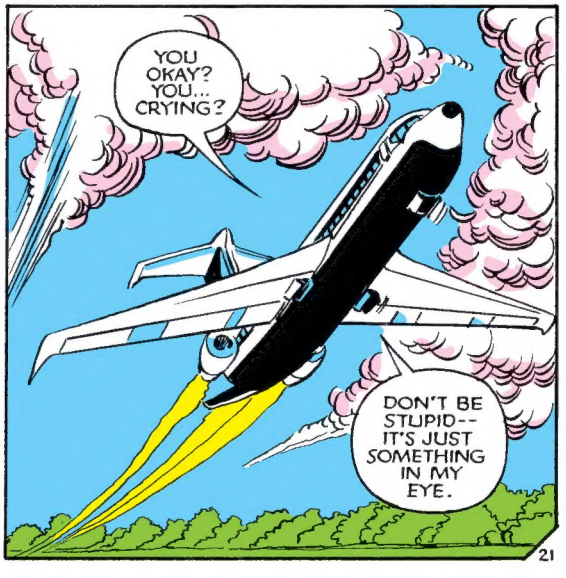

IF YOU LOVE ME, KITTEN, YOU MUST LET ME DO SO.
I'M SCARED, ORORO.
WILL IT HAPPEN TO ME, TOO, LIKE THIS? IF I FALL IN LOVE, WILL IT ONLY BE FOR A WHILE? OR, WORSE, WILL THE PERSON I LOVE STOP LOVING ME--?
I CAN'T BEAR SEEING YOU DESTROY YOURSELF.

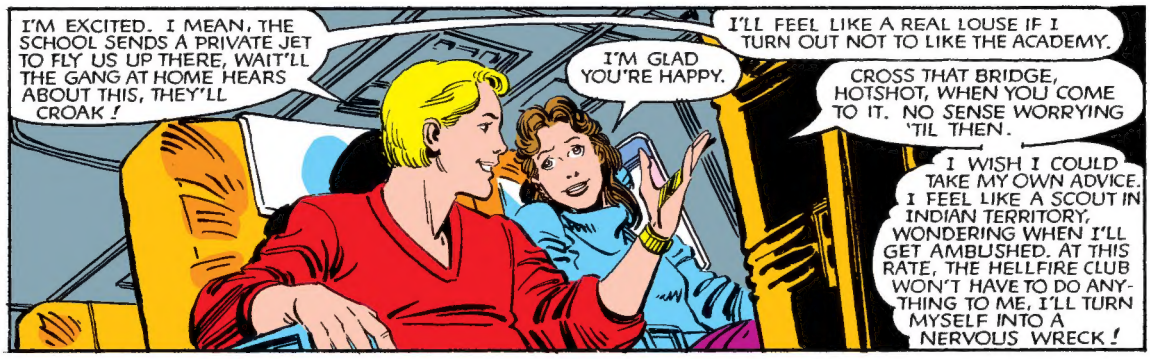

PERHAPS I AM INFECTED WITH A KIND OF MADNESS-- BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY ADULT LIFE, I CAN LAUGH. AND CRY.
I CAN FEEL-- TO THE FULLEST EXTENT OF MY BEING--
--WITHOUT HAVING TO DENY THAT EMOTION AND CAST IT OUT, FOR WHAT I THOUGHT WAS MY OWN GOOD.
BEAR WITH ME, KITTY, STAND BY ME-- I NEED THE STRENGTH OF A TRUE FRIEND. EVEN IF, IN DAYS TO COME, THAT STRENGTH MAY BE THE ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO LET ME GO.
CAN YOU DO THAT?
I... I'LL TRY.


LaGUARDIA AIRPORT, THE FOLLOWING WEEK...
OH, CRIPES, I'VE FORGOTTEN SOMETHING, I KNOW IT!
YOU AREN'T GOING TO THE MOON, KATZCHEN. MASSACHUSETTS IS, I BELIEVE, PART OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD--AND YOU CAN ALWAYS HAVE US SEND A "CARE" PACKAGE.
UNITED
REALLY, NIGHTCRAWLER? YOU'RE A PRINCE!

I GUESS IT'S TIME.
I ALREADY MISS YOU, PETER. GIMME A KISS FOR LUCK?
HAVE A NICE TRIP, KATYA. TAKE CARE.

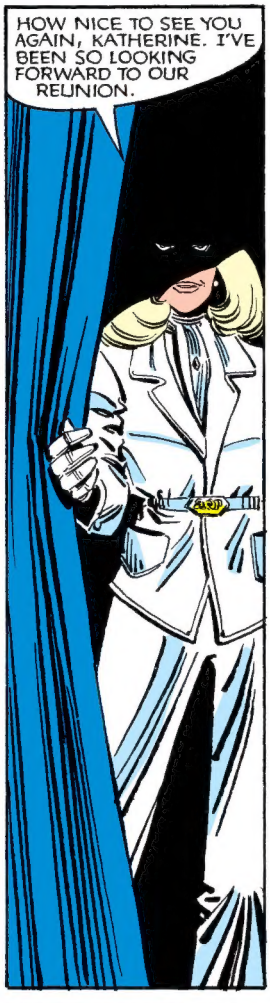
WHAT'D I DO, WHY'S PETER ACTING SO STRANGELY? HE'S SO UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN I'M AROUND, DOESN'T HE CARE FOR ME ANYMORE?!
HEY, KITTY, NO NEED TO LOOK SO SAD--
--WE'LL ONLY BE GONE A WEEK.

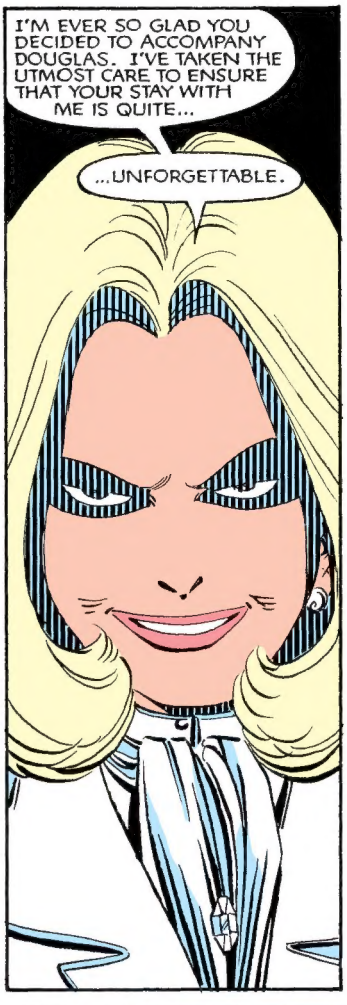

YOU OKAY? YOU... CRYING?
DON'T BE STUPID-- IT'S JUST SOMETHING IN MY EYE.


I'M EXCITED. I MEAN, THE SCHOOL SENDS A PRIVATE JET TO FLY US UP THERE, WAIT'LL THE GANG AT HOME HEARS ABOUT THIS, THEY'LL CROAK!
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HAPPY.
I'LL FEEL LIKE A REAL LOUSE IF I TURN OUT NOT TO LIKE THE ACADEMY.
CROSS THAT BRIDGE, HOTSHOT, WHEN YOU COME TO IT. NO SENSE WORRYING 'TIL THEN.
I WISH I COULD TAKE MY OWN ADVICE. I FEEL LIKE A SCOUT IN INDIAN TERRITORY, WONDERING WHEN I'LL GET AMBUSHED. AT THIS RATE, THE HELLFIRE CLUB WON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING TO ME, I'LL TURN MYSELF INTO A NERVOUS WRECK!

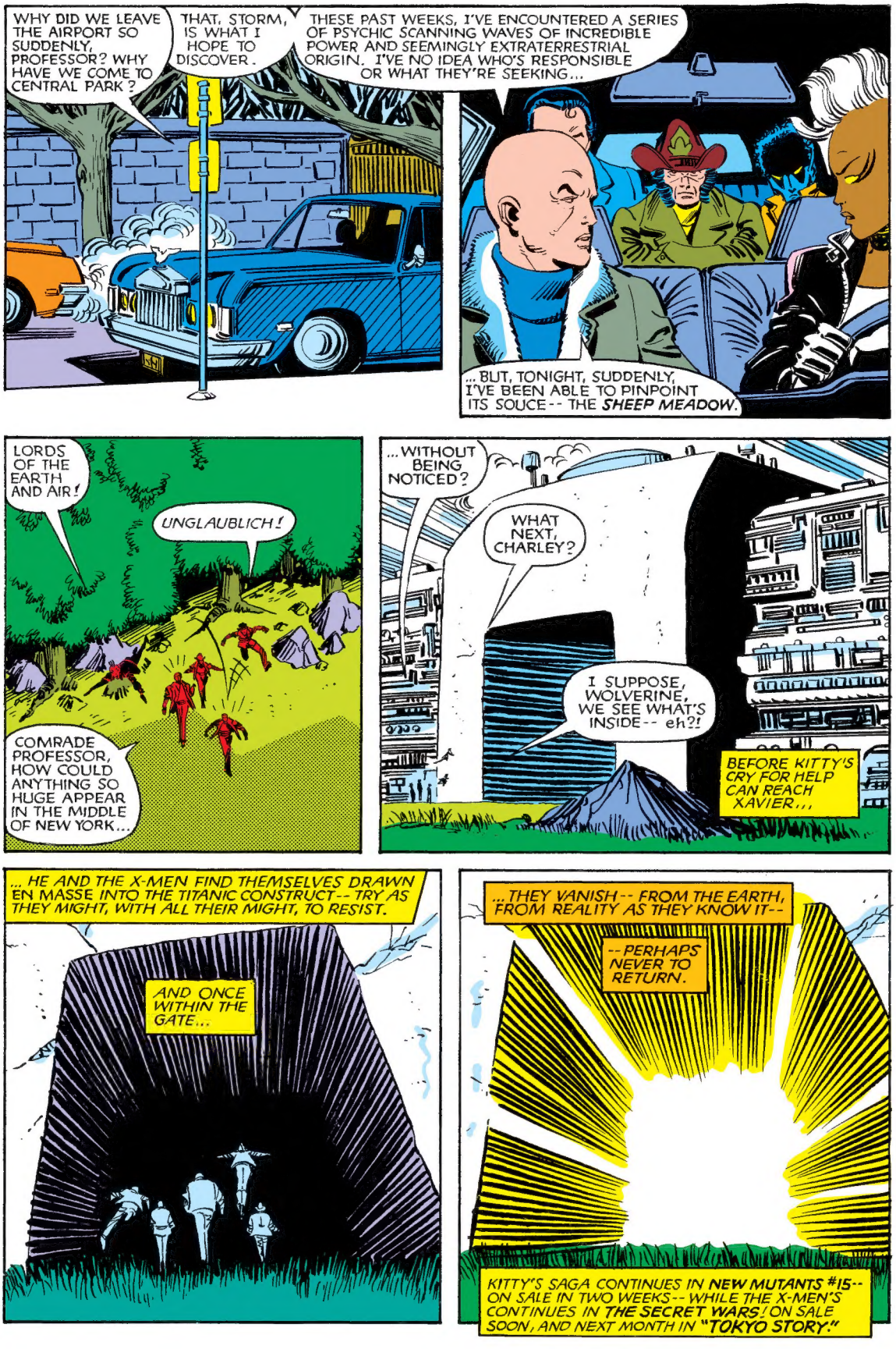
THIS IS STUPID! MY PLAN COVERS EVERY CONTINGENCY-- PROFESSOR XAVIER SAID SO-- NOTHING CAN GO WRONG.
ON BEHALF OF THE MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY, DOUGLAS AND KATHERINE...

... I WELCOME YOU ABOARD.
THAT VOICE-- IT CAN'T BE!


HOW NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, KATHERINE. I'VE BEEN SO LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR REUNION.


I'M EVER SO GLAD YOU DECIDED TO ACCOMPANY DOUGLAS. I'VE TAKEN THE UTMOST CARE TO ENSURE THAT YOUR STAY WITH ME IS QUITE...
...UNFORGETTABLE.

EMMA FROST-- THE WHITE QUEEN!
PROFESSOR XAVIER-- HELP!!


WHY DID WE LEAVE THE AIRPORT SO SUDDENLY, PROFESSOR? WHY HAVE WE COME TO CENTRAL PARK?
THAT, STORM, IS WHAT I HOPE TO DISCOVER.
THESE PAST WEEKS, I'VE ENCOUNTERED A SERIES OF PSYCHIC SCANNING WAVES OF INCREDIBLE POWER AND SEEMINGLY EXTRATERRESTRIAL ORIGIN. I'VE NO IDEA WHO'S RESPONSIBLE OR WHAT THEY'RE SEEKING...
...BUT, TONIGHT, SUDDENLY, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PINPOINT ITS SOUCE -- THE SHEEP MEADOW.
LORDS OF THE EARTH AND AIR!
UNGLAUBLICH!
COMRADE PROFESSOR, HOW COULD ANYTHING SO HUGE APPEAR IN THE MIDDLE OF NEW YORK...
...WITHOUT BEING NOTICED?
WHAT NEXT, CHARLEY?
I SUPPOSE, WOLVERINE, WE SEE WHAT'S INSIDE -- eh?!
BEFORE KITTY'S CRY FOR HELP CAN REACH XAVIER...
... HE AND THE X-MEN FIND THEMSELVES DRAWN EN MASSE INTO THE TITANIC CONSTRUCT -- TRY AS THEY MIGHT, WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT, TO RESIST.
AND ONCE WITHIN THE GATE...
...THEY VANISH -- FROM THE EARTH, FROM REALITY AS THEY KNOW IT --
-- PERHAPS NEVER TO RETURN.
KITTY'S SAGA CONTINUES IN NEW MUTANTS #15 -- ON SALE IN TWO WEEKS -- WHILE THE X-MEN'S CONTINUES IN THE SECRET WARS! ON SALE SOON, AND NEXT MONTH IN "TOKYO STORY."